american craft

Expanding the Craft Toolbox: Old Meets New

Many Cultures Converge in South Africa's Cape Town



Michael Sherrill
Natural Narratives in Clay, Metal and Glass

April / May 2010
$5.00 US / $7.00 CAN

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american craft

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Departments



Right:
Cristiano Bianchin
Urna (Urn), 2007,
hand-blown, ground and polished glass, crocheted synthetic thread, steel, 18 x 8 in.
page 030

Photo © Barry Friedman Ltd.

Features

"How do I draw with small pieces of porcelain? Metal becomes the backbone for a line or an idea that I want to express." —Michael Sherrill

On the cover (detail) and below:
Michael Sherrill
Sea Flower, Julesvernium, 2008, silica bronze, Moretti glass, mokume porcelain, 43 x 20 x 11½ in.



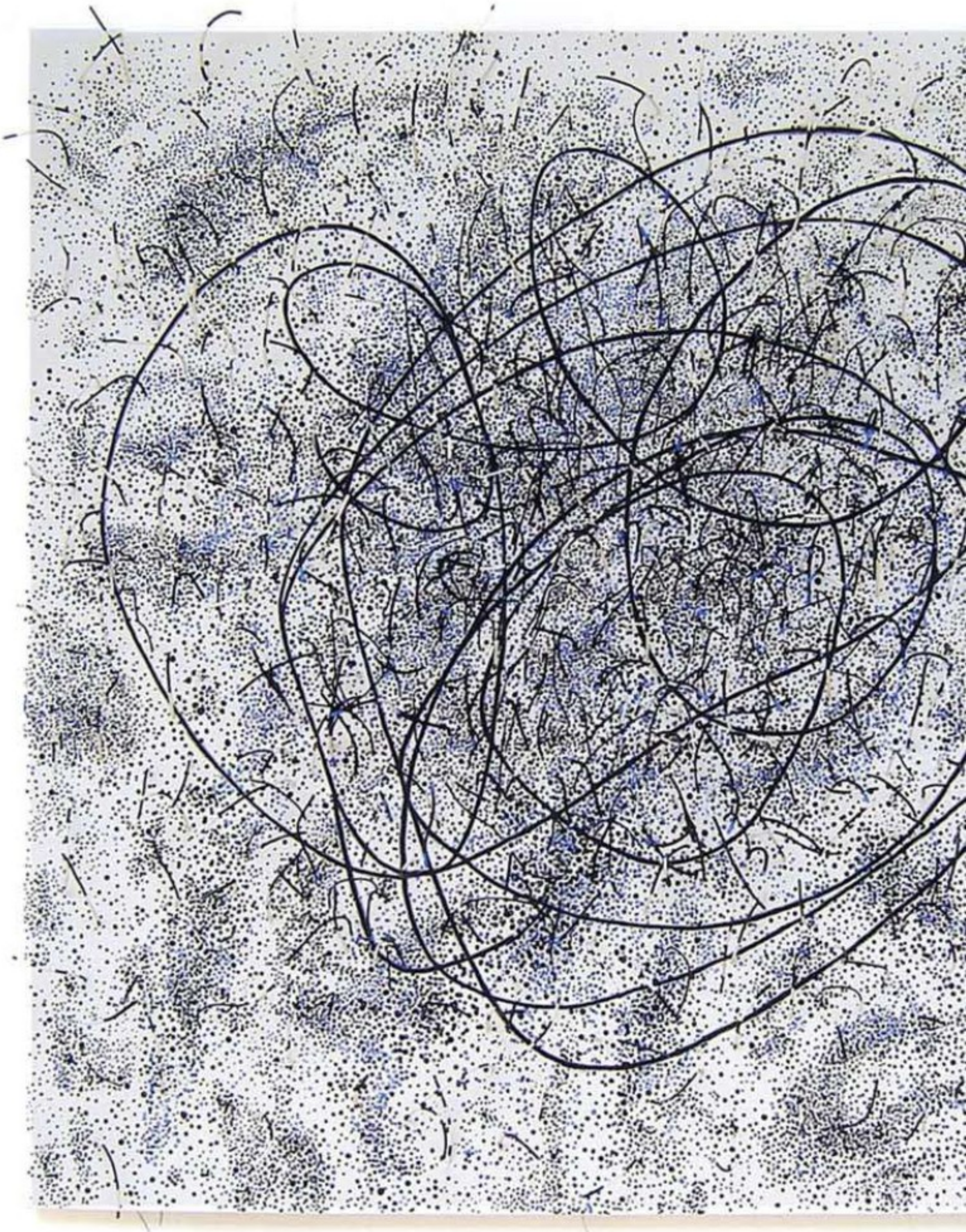
This page and cover photos Tim Barnwell.

americancraftmag.org
More photos, more reviews, more listings, more interviews and more of everything craft-related and beyond.



Steel Divide, cast and cut glass, fused steel, 35 x 7 x 3 inches.

Ritzi Jacobi, represented by browngrotta arts



american craft

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The cover of the February/March 2010 American Craft.

Continuing the Conversation
Praise to American Craft for supporting the place and discussion of criticism.

The Jed Perl article (June/July 2008), the recent article by Eleanor Heartney (February/March 2010) and other publications indicate there is something at stake.

Heartney gives us an accurate description of how certain artists have utilized elements of craft in their work. Her article brings to light another contested territory essential to accurate and valuable analysis, that of judgment and description in criticism. This discussion has provoked two recent publications: *Critical Mess,* edited by Raphael Rubinstein, and *What Happened to Art Criticism?* by James Elkins; and two chapter headings: "Art Criticism: Where's the Depth?" and "Modern Art's Failure of Critical Nerve" in an older publication, *The Critic Is Artist* by Donald Kuspit.

I would like to suggest that Heartney has chosen to follow the crowd in her refusal to bring her descriptive analysis to the conclusion of critical judgment, thereby leaving us with some facts, but little comment on their relevance for art, craft or society. She is accurate in saying that "taste becomes a matter of context, not content." But when context does become content then that content needs a more rigorous analysis.

Such analysis would also reveal some incorrect assumptions by Heartney. To suggest that Koons's use of "master ceramists, glassblowers, and wood and stone carvers" somehow rebuts Perl's critique of the lack of handcraftsmanship in Koons's work and indeed establishes the presence of "craft" in his work is a failure to examine the intent and finished form of the "craft" that Koons utilizes.

Heartney's characterization of the art/craft territory as "contested" is accurate. But the rendering of judgment in assessing contemporary practices of the elements of art and craft now reveals that the reinforcement of the border obscures accurate assessment of the intention and quality of their use.

JIM ROMBERG
Abiquiu, NM

More to Enjoy in Sweden
I enjoyed the piece on Stockholm in the February/March issue. Readers who go to Sweden should also visit the Lutheran Cathedral in Växjö, a city located at the edge of the Glass District. While the standard guidebooks dismiss it as barely worth a visit, since it reopened in 1995, it has been adding a substantial number of wonderful pieces created by some of Sweden's most prominent contemporary craftsmen–including work by Göran Wärff (glass baptismal font), Eric Höglund and Lars

Larson (metal and glass *Tree of Life and Knowledge*) Jan Brazda (*Altar and Quire Window*), Bo Beskow (three stained glass windows) and Ulla Gowenius (*Sanctuary Carpet*). The true masterpiece is Bertil Vallien's massive triptych *From Darkness to Light* that is laden with the heads of the Apostles, scenes from the Old and New Testaments, the heavens, and a large cast-glass body of Christ. Our recent visit came just after we had visited medieval cathedrals in Amsterdam and Antwerp that contained great art but in dark and dingy conditions, and they were overcrowded. The Cathedral in Växjö is bright and airy, the crafts speak to contemporary tastes, and it is quiet and peaceful.
NORMAN D. STEVENS
Storrs, CT

Looking to the Future
I hate long goodbyes. I stand in my doorway and the dear departing won't leave! Why won't they go? I realize they are hoping we will speed them on their way.

This is an analogy for what is being discussed today in the crafts. No one has the answer. Adaptation is shaped by changing technology, and answers never stay put.

Sixty years ago the craft movement was intertwined with idealism. Among my peers the ideal of simplicity prevailed. We wanted to live self-sufficient lives, having nothing in our houses that was not beautiful. We were willing to hand-wash dishes and sweaters, polish silver, wax furniture, all to preserve the cherished object. Then the age of high-tech overtook us. One had to have a phone, a car, a typewriter. Soon we were bulldozed into having a television, and, later, computers.

I suggest there are two aspects to craft. One is the underlying ideology and the other is the resulting product. The loyalty to the philosophy and way of life remains a vital link across all sorts of social lines. I find today's endless self-advertisement with web pages, competitive shows, and, worst of all, the academization of craft—with three hours of clay sandwiched between "Urban Sociology" and "English Literature of the 17th Century"—absurd.

I reread Harold J Brennan's article on "his" (our) School for American Craftsmen in the May/June 1960 *Craft Horizons*. There was a separate space for each student. Forty hours at the bench, wheel, loom. "Ah, yes," I thought.

Standing in the doorway, I wish the new generation well. But go already. Stop this nostalgia, this clinging to an "old" you reject.
LILI KRAKOWSKI
Constable, NY

I am an emerging glass and fiber artist from Philadelphia and I just wanted to say how great an inspiration your magazine is to me. After graduating from art school and being out in the "real world" it's difficult to stay inspired and keep moving forward, but your magazine with all of your amazing artists really helps. Hopefully, some day one of them will be me.
SARA HORNE
Philadelphia, PA

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Anonymous letters will not be printed.

Thinking about Tools

"The sense of interjecting discovery and play in my work became an early learning tool."
—Michael Sherrill

It is hard to think about any craft without visualizing the tools used in that activity. There are, of course, those hand tools that have always been and will always be a part of what it means to be a maker. But as society has grown and changed, so has what has come to be considered part of a craftsperson's toolbox.

Our columnist Glenn Adamson praises the humble pencil as a tool for "thinking tentatively" and, literally, drawing its user into an active process, (Considering…, page 36). The eminent engineer and author Henry Petroski, in a philosophical yet down-to-earth discussion with critic Suzanne Ramljak, considers tools–including the toothpick, the hammer and the steam engine–as he argues for the importance of engineering in solving our global problems ("Henry Petroski on Essential Engineering," page 46).

For ceramist Michael Sherrill, tools and toolmaking are second nature, part of his artistic development and a direct route to beauty ("Natural Narratives," page 38). And speaking of beauty, metalsmith Sue Aygarn-Kowalski creates appealing objects that could be used as tools–hammers, balances and such–but are destined for the gallery pedestal (Reviewed, page 34). Woodworker and writer Glenn Gordon takes note of the beauty coexisting with perfect functionality in the amazing planes produced by several small companies devoted to high-end hand tools for woodworking–a kind of "shop jewelry" fit for a trophy cabinet (Outskirts, page 28).

In our concern for the future of craft, we've given some thought to the tools used in higher education, and were eager to find out what decorative arts historian Jo Lauria would discover when she proposed to examine the role digital technology has played in the education of those who want to design and make things without losing the hand. After observing the way product design is being taught in three leading art schools, she reports back that contrary to what we might suppose, some of the new technologies are leading students back to a significant role for the hand ("Expanding the Toolbox," page 50).

This preoccupation with tools prompted us as editors to look around the office for our own candidate for favorite, or at any rate ubiquitous, tool, setting aside, of course, the electronic devices that by now have become extensions of ourselves. The one we lighted on (Adamson having preempted the pencil) is definitely low-tech, little more than 30 years old, quite helpful in communication and "flagging," has even been used in art, and comes in a variety of sizes and colorways. Perhaps you've already guessed. How would we in the modern office (or even at home, come to think of it) function without the Post-it note? ✚



Ceramics tools from Michael Sherrill's toolbox, many handmade by him. Some are from his Mudtools line, which he created when he found that the available clay tools didn't always fit his needs and other ceramists felt the same way.

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zoom

An up close guide to books, galleries, people & places



Radar

The Experience of Place



2

All her life Meredith Brickell has been sensitive to her surroundings. "For me, the thread that connects my work is observations of place," she says. Her early backdrops were pastoral–the New Jersey farm she grew up on, the prairies of Nebraska, where she attended college.

When she moved her studio to an industrial neighborhood in downtown Raleigh, NC, "my thinking shifted. The urban landscape has been a new source of inspiration, even though it is a very different aesthetic," she says. "For a long time, I was only interested in beautiful, isolated, rural spaces. But I am increasingly interested in the complexity of imperfect landscapes. They might not be as 'beautiful,' but I appreciate the many interconnected layers that make up these places–people, architecture, urban planning, abandoned sites."

In her ceramic and mixed-media sculpture, Brickell expresses the experience of place in visceral, intuitive ways, through subtle, minimal use of form, line and color. *Tanks* ❷, a simple arrangement of rustic vessels elevated on scaffolding, stirs sensations associated with pools of water–depth, floating, stillness. "These containers articulate emptiness, while simultaneously creating a landscape of tangible objects," she explains. The lone, tiny window in her Raleigh studio inspired *Ground View,* a series of pastel drawings on plaster panels, offering fragments of a city skyline, glimpsed as if in peripheral vision or darkness. Last year Brickell took part in a collaborative project at the Watershed Center for the Ceramic Arts in Maine that dealt with the concept of place; she and fellow artists created an installation out of found objects gathered on the property (but, in a nod to Watershed's proximity to rivers, lakes and ocean, only things that were blue).

Personal space is the theme of *Bones* ❶, an array of small, mysterious earthenware artifacts laid out on the floor as if for inventory. "This collection refers to the realm of the hand-held–tools, toys, found objects, the things we carry with us," says Brickell, who conceived the piece following the deaths of two of her grandparents. "The arrangement emulates the process of sorting through personal items when moving, or culling and redistributing possessions after someone dies. These ceramic forms represent a memory of an object, rather than the actual object itself. They're ambiguous, and they exist in a murky space between the familiar and unfamiliar."

Brickell and her husband, furniture designer Ray Duffey, recently moved to Indianapolis, where she has a stimulating new job teaching art at DePauw University. "I love the interdisciplinary dialogues that happen," she says of the liberal-arts academic environment–how an archaeology class, for example, will visit her ceramics studio. One can't help but wonder what visions this new ambience will inspire in her art.—J.L.

mbrickell.com

Tanks photo Lynn Ruck.

Hot Spots

On View

Gallery shows, listed A–Z by state. View complete calendar: americancraftmag.org

CA / Los Angeles
Fowler Museum at UCLA
Nick Cave: Meet Me at the Center of the Earth
to May 30
fowler.ucla.edu
Found-object garments styled to make sounds when worn.

CA / San Francisco
San Francisco Museum of Craft+Design
Designers on Jewelry: 12 Years of Jewelry Production by Chi ha paura…?
to May 16
sfmcd.org
Imaginative jewelry, including pieces from the Chi ha paura…? Foundation, founded by the Dutch jeweler Gijs Bakker.

DC / Washington
National Building Museum
28th Annual Smithsonian Craft Show
Apr. 22–25
smithsoniancraftshow.org
A showcase of handmade wares by gifted American artists.



1



2

Product Placement
Andy Paiko

Andy Paiko's otherworldly glass objects are like curios one might encounter at Hogwarts, or in Tim Burton's house. Ornate bell jars enshrine gold-plated chunks of coyote spine or other odd fetishes, transformed as if by alchemy. An absinthe fountain, etched with skull and crossbones, conjures a ritual partaking of wicked spirits. A "lube rack" showcases a sly assortment of quirky wee containers filled with "everything for the friction-free existence," from motor oil to Vaseline to bourbon. These are elegant implements for strange doings.

"I try to play with functionality," says Paiko, 32, whose down-to-earth manner contrasts with the gothic eccentricity of his works. "I really try to stay away from objects for objects' sake, on a pedestal, functionless." Based in Portland, OR, he divides his production into "vesselware" (candlesticks ❶, vases ❷ and other decorative but conventionally useful items) and "sculptural vesselware" (such as the bell jars), all of which he'll happily customize. Then there are his pure "sculptures," which include some wildly unlikely contrivances in glass: a fairy-tale spinning wheel that can actually produce yarn, a seismograph that can measure earthquakes and *Locus* ❸, a funhouse-like mirror reflecting distorted images. An art history professor who saw Paiko's pieces at the ACC Baltimore craft show remarked that they seemed "somewhat out of time," at once antiquated and futuristic. It was, the artist says, "the best compliment I ever got."

Paiko also cherishes the best advice he ever got, a withering critique from a college art teacher, who dismissed his glass cups, bowls and vases as ho-hum, and challenged him to experiment with different forms. "It shook me up," he recalls. So he made a glass hammer. "I'm sure it wasn't the first. Still, it was an ironic object. It would work, but only once." The feeling of freedom it gave him has informed his approach to the medium ever since. He recently completed his most adventurous project to date, a collaboration with the composer Ethan Rose for Portland's Museum of Contemporary Craft, where the two created a gallery of kinetic sound by filling a room with 40 wall-mounted reinterpretations of the glass armonica (an instrument invented by Benjamin Franklin that generates tone through friction on glass, like a wet finger rubbed around the rim of a goblet).



3

Most days, Paiko bikes to his studio downtown where he blows individual glass components that he later builds into elaborate constructions in his garage. Sometimes his wife, an art teacher with a more "clean, spare" aesthetic, lends an eye and counsels just the right touch of restraint, he says. "Left unchecked, I tend toward the baroque."—J.L.
andypaikoglass.com

DC / Washington
Renwick Gallery
The Art of Gaman
to Jan. 30, 2011
americanart.si.edu
Japanese Americans in U.S. internment camps during World War II created arts and crafts essential for both creature comforts and emotional stability.

FL / St. Petersburg
Florida Craftsmen, Inc.
The Artful Table
to May 29
floridacraftsmen.net
From functional to ornamental, items for the table are showcased by arranging them in dining room settings, complete with entrees from local restaurants.

IA / Iowa City
AKAR
Mark Shapiro, Brad Schwieger
May 28–June 18
akardesign.com
Elements of utility pair with gestural markings in this two-person exhibition that addresses the relationship between the sculptural and functional in pottery.

❶ KY / Louisville
Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft
Glass Jewelry: An International Passion for Design
Apr. 24–July 17
kentuckyarts.org
Joyce Roessler's *Tubes Brooch* exemplifies both the sophisticated methods and spirit of nonconformity of the artists who choose to create jewelry with glass.



1



Jean Williams Cacicedo at Hibberd McGrath Gallery

CONTEMPORARY
CRAFT



Cheryl Tall at Obsidian Gallery

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WEYRICH GALLERY/ THE RARE VISION ART GALERIE

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WHITE BIRD GALLERY

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(503) 436-2681 • www.whitebirdgallery.com



Karen Croner at White Bird Gallery

Voices
What effect has the Internet had on your work or career?

While I have a website, I don't have high expectations of sales from it. Having a site, driving traffic to it and selling through it are different tasks. I find its cachet of professionalism useful. The Internet also offers me immediate information and communication. My use of it for my business has diminished during my tenure as president of the Furniture Society, but it has grown by an order of magnitude in my daily work schedule. I'd be lost without it.
—**Andrew Glantz**, *president, Furniture Society, owner, Zenith Design, Scottsdale, AZ*

The Internet makes communication and research easier and faster. Early on in my studio career, I wrote the code for a simple portfolio-style website. Over the years it has expanded and evolved, but the original motivation remains the same: to serve as an easy access point for learning more about my carved paper sculpture. It has proven its worth in augmenting other marketing tools by displaying the full breadth of my work, filling in details, answering questions and redirecting interested parties to my galleries' websites for sales and future shows.
—**Jennifer Falck Linssen**, *hand-carved paper sculptor, Niwot, CO*

In the 1970s, when I was a young "stringer"—independent reporter—for the *New York Times* in Chicago, my assignments for trend stories arrived via telegram, carrying the cachet of extraordinary speed. With the Internet, I carry on a correspondence of remarkable immediacy and depth with people all over the world. But the best interviews still demand a person-to-person encounter. And when I really want to clarify a point with an editor, I pick up the phone.
—**Polly Ullrich**, *art critic, Chicago, IL*

As an artist based in New York but originally from Rome, I've found that the Internet has allowed me to connect and collaborate with international designers in a way that would never have been possible before. It's as if we're all still sharing the same studio, even though we're oceans apart. Another major plus of designing in a web-based world is having such fast access to so many different resources and materials. This allows me not only to be more innovative in my work but to produce ideas more quickly as well.
—**Emanuela Duca**, *jeweler, New York City*

The Internet makes it much easier for my gallery to research artists and to send images to the press and clients. It also offers a new vehicle for individual artists to market their own work at no cost and collectors to pursue artists directly—a double-edged sword.



The role of commercial galleries for contemporary artists is diminishing. In the future, nonprofit art spaces and museums—subsidized by the state, foundations or universities—will exhibit work where there is no business imperative. Commercial galleries will exist more and more exclusively for historical works and for showing at art fairs, an experience closer to surfing the Net.
—**Rebecca Cross**, *director, cross mackenzie gallery, Washington, DC*

In the last 10 years I've been able to research and implement new technologies. I've taken in new ideas from the worlds of art, craft, design, fashion, science. I can't imagine this type of access—both the variety and the depth—without the Internet.

For me, the Internet always oscillates between being the best research tool and the greatest distraction machine. The boundary, of course, is painfully blurry.

Down the line, I see a new frontier for makers who are interested in creating objects linked via the web, as described in the concept of "the Internet of things."
—**Andy Brayman**, *ceramist, Kansas City, KS*

Making products in the United States has only gotten more costly. One of the first things we realized when we took over Heath Ceramics six years ago was the need to sell direct as well as wholesale to make the business work. The opportunity of e-commerce has given manufacturing in the U.S. a second chance. The other really important aspect of the Internet is the ability you have to fully communicate your story. We take full advantage.
—**Catherine Bailey** and **Robin Petravic**, *owners, Heath Ceramics, Sausalito, CA*—**C.K.**

Illustration Tamara Shopsin.

The American Museum of Ceramic Art *presents*

An Exhibition of Tabletop Vessels from AMOCA's Permanent Collection

Let's Table This



Warren MacKenzie



Sam Chung

January 23, 2010 through April 24, 2010

Co-curated by
Jo Lauria and Billie Sessions, Ph.D

March 27, 2010, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

~Members Only Event~

The Ubiquitous Teapot—from Function to Art

Sonny and Gloria Kamm, widely known for their collection of over 6,000 teapots, will present a lecture and slide show.



Geoffrey Swindell



Carol Wedemeyer

Let's Table This, An Exhibition of Tabletop Vessels, is the premier appearance of AMOCA's Permanent Collection, including many pieces donated to the museum by the American Ceramic Society. Represented by 185 table-top ceramic objects drawn from AMOCA's 1,000-piece holdings, the exhibit demonstrates myriads of techniques, imagination, creativity, and originality.

150 Artists represented, including: Jerry Ackerman • Chuck Aydlett • Ralph Bacerra • Mary Barringer • Linda Christianson • Tom Coleman • Dora DeLarios • John Glick • Otto Heino • Wayne Higby • Elaine Katzer • Peter Lane • Les Lawrence • Ricky Maldonado • Rick Malmgren • Tony Marsh • Tim Mather • Harrison McIntosh • John Neely • Jeff Oestreich • Ben Owen III • Susan Peterson • Don Reitz • Lucie Rie • Sam Scott • Dave Shaner • Robert Sperry • Chris Staley • Vince Suez • Byron Temple • Gerry Williams



Don Pilcher



Mark Shapiro

kilnopening.edu - **May 8 through June 26, 2010**

kilnopening.edu, a showcase of local college faculty members and select students, is presented in support of ceramic education.

American Museum of Ceramic Art

AMOCA

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Open Wednesday - Saturday, 12-5 pm & 'Second Saturday' of each month to 9 pm, or by appointment


❶

Shop Talk

Jewelry and More

Luke & Eloy Gallery
5169 Butler St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15201
412-784-1919
lukeandeloy.ning.com

From the time she was very young, Brigitte Martin ❶, a jeweler and the owner of Luke & Eloy Gallery in Pittsburgh, has been surrounded by art. While growing up in Cologne, West Germany, she traveled with her parents throughout Europe, where they spent hours visiting museums and castles. It was this love of art combined with a fascination for how pieces are formed that led to Martin's subsequent apprenticeship with a German master goldsmith. In September 2008 Martin, who moved to the U.S. with her American husband in 1994, opened Luke & Eloy (named for the patron saint of fine artists and the patron saint of metalsmiths, respectively), which displays not just jewelry, but other media as well, including ceramics, such as Laura Jean McLaughlin's *Night Rider* ❷, fiber, wood and photography.

Why did you open a gallery?
Being a jewelry maker myself, I enjoy interacting with artists, their creations, and customers who appreciate them. It's wonderful to see a customer find the perfect piece. My goal is to make craft accessible. By showing interesting work in an unintimidating environment, I'm able to foster appreciation of jewelry as an art form that is meant to be experienced.

What challenges do you encounter being both a gallery owner and a jewelry artist?
It is sometimes hard to balance the two–they often seem to be at opposite ends of the creative spectrum. With the gallery I focus on others' needs first before I allow myself to sit down and do my own thing in the studio. On the plus side, I get a lot of direct feedback from customers and artists. That is very valuable and certainly beats sitting by myself in my studio all day.


❷

How would you describe the arts scene in Pittsburgh?
Given Pittsburgh's relatively small size and industrial background, out-of-towners are always astounded to encounter a thoroughly modern city with an incredibly vibrant and diverse art and craft scene. Many visitors to Luke & Eloy have commented that they are absolutely blown away by the many cultural offerings and the quality of the various shows and institutions we have.

What is some of the new and exciting work you're seeing?
I'm a big fan of students' and recent graduates' work and the fresh approaches they take. I'm particularly fond of work that incorporates unexpected media combinations or that surprises me with ingenious ideas and technical finesse. Vincent Pontillo, Loring Taoka and Anthony Tammaro are among my favorite artists right now, but I also love what comes from Europe. I am proud to be the first U.S. gallery showing English artist Charlotte Daffern's "Acid Housewife Collection" this coming fall.

Do you wear much jewelry?
I wear pieces that have a humorous component, incorporate unusual materials or have a message imbedded. My favorites right now are made from plastic: one is a pink cake-mixer brooch laser-cut from Plexiglas by Arthur Hash ❶ ; the other is a Lego bracelet by emiko oye ❶. I've gotten a lot of mileage out of these works. Interesting jewelry makes for great dinner conversation.—S.S.


❷

KY / Paducah
National Quilt Museum
Imagine Hope
Apr. 9–May 25
quiltmuseum.org
Hollis Chatelain's monochromatic textile pieces address key social and environmental issues facing our world today.

LA / Lafayette
Paul and Lulu Hilliard University Art Museum
Turning Wood Into Art: The Jane and Arthur Mason Collection
May 15–Dec. 4
museum.louisiana.edu
Influential artists of the 1960s as well as the next major group of turners to emerge are among the 40 artists featured in this touring exhibition.

MA / Boston
Seaport World Trade Center
CraftBoston
Apr. 9–11
craftboston.org
The Society of Arts and Crafts' must-see show features outstanding work handmade for your life and wallet.

❷ MT / Helena
Holter Museum of Art
Marie Watt: Forgot-Me-Not
to Apr. 25
holtermuseum.org
Embroidered portraits, such as *Democracy is Merry (Demokratie ist lustig)* honor lives lost in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

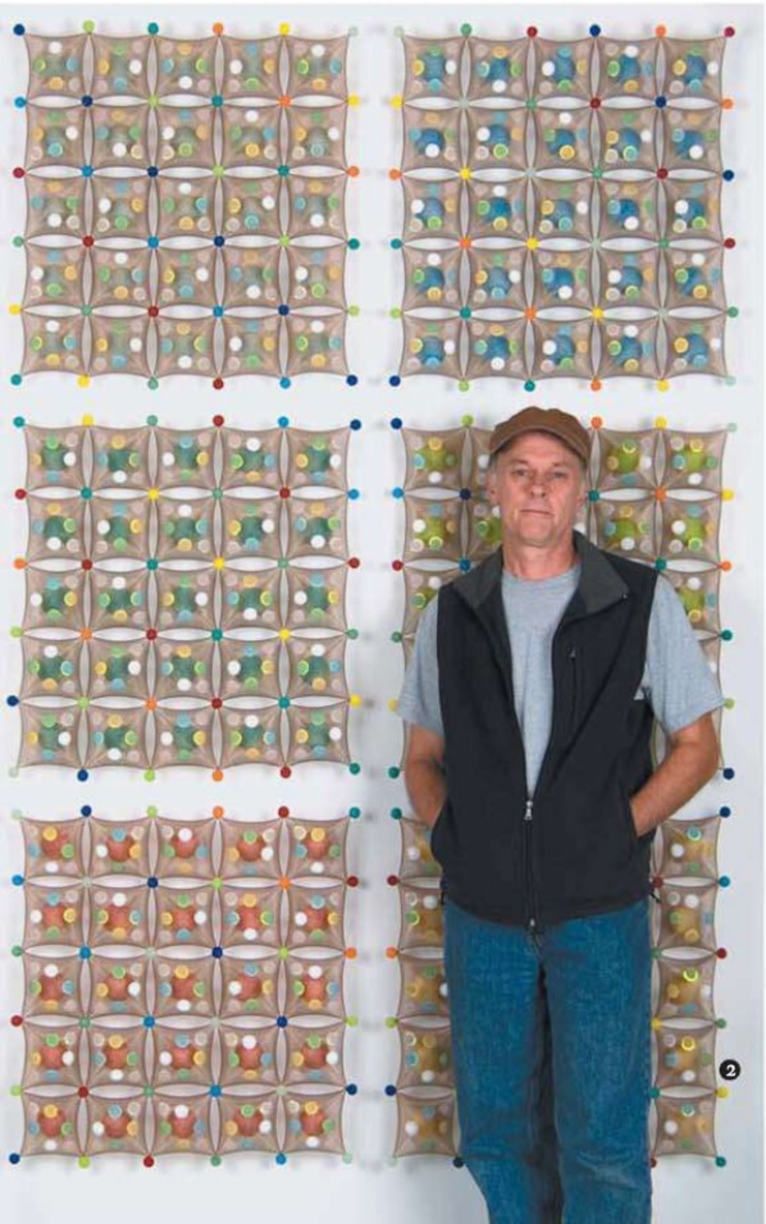
Brigitte Martin portrait David Albrecht / Watt photo Adam McIsaac.



❶

People & Places

Have You Heard?



❷

News

Friends have rallied in support of the furniture maker **Jon Brooks**, whose studio in New Hampshire burned down in January. The unique structure was lost along with finished pieces and machinery, though his house nearby was spared and nobody was harmed (visit jonbrooks.org for updates or to donate to the reconstruction project)... Five Americans—**Regina Benson, Lanny Bergner**, creator of *Multiplicity* ❷, **Tim Harding, Nancy Koenigsberg** and **Mary Zicafoose**—have work in the prestigious 13th International Triennial of Tapestry, May 10-Oct. 31 at the **Central Museum of Textiles** in Lodz, Poland.

Transitions

Bill Moggridge, who designed the first laptop computer in 1980 and co-founded the firm IDEO, has become director of the Smithsonian's **Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum** in New York... The **Arizona State University Art Museum** has a new head—**Gordon Knox,** formerly with the Stanford Humanities Lab at Stanford University... The **Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens** in San Marino, CA, has named its first curator of American decorative arts—**Harold B. ("Hal") Nelson,** a specialist in decorative art and contemporary craft... The **Wharton Esherick Museum** in Paoli, PA, bid farewell to longtime executive director **Rob Leonard,** who retired, and has welcomed **Tamara Barnes,** who succeeds him... **Bonnie Laing-Malcomson,** who was president of the **Oregon College of Art & Craft** for the past nine years, steps down in May with plans to pursue her own art work.

Spaces

The Tar Heel State is the place to see world-class art this year as two major venues debut. The expanded **North Carolina Museum of Art** unveils in April, featuring a 127,000-square-foot addition designed by **Thomas Phifer and Partners** (ncartmuseum.org). In October, the Mint Museum unveils its new satellite, the **Mint Museum Uptown,** to encompass the **Mint Museum of Craft + Design.** The inaugural show features contemporary British studio ceramics from the collection of **Diane** and **Marc Grainer** (mintmuseum.org)... The **Davis Art Center** kicked off its 50th-anniversary in January with "A Seed Planted: A Tribute to Robert Arneson," which presented sculptures by the late, great California Pop artist and longtime ceramics professor at UC Davis (davisartcenter.org)... **some things looming** is the beguiling name of a new gallery for contemporary and traditional fiber art launched by **Rebekah Ritter** and her daughter, **Melanie Mitchell,** in Reading, PA (somethingslooming.com)...

Nathan Purcell and **Ian Kerr** have closed their two glass spaces in Philadelphia–**Silica Galleries** and **Philadelphia Glass Works**–but continue to operate **Easy Street Gallery** in Brooklyn (easystreetbrooklyn.com).

Granted

From the Rockefeller Foundation, $600,000 to the **Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum**, New York City, for an exhibition series exploring design solutions for "underserved and marginalized" communities around the world… From the **Coby Foundation**, $418,000 for 19 fashion and textile arts projects, among them "Lace in Translation" at the **Design Center at Philadelphia University** (through Apr. 3) and "Connecticut Needlework: Women and the Emergence of American Art, 1740-1840," opening in October at the **Connecticut Historical Society**.

On Commission

A historic 60s-era high-modernist office tower in downtown Pittsburgh is the site of a dramatic new lighting installation–*Rivers of Glass*, an undulating cascade of some 1,300 handblown blue globes suspended in the lobby of 11 Stanwix Street. The city's three rivers inspired artists **Jill Reynolds** and **Daniel Spitzer,** who modeled the work on high-speed images of water droplets to represent a sound wave from the composition "Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue" by local jazz legend **Billy Strayhorn.** The **Pittsburgh Glass Center** partnered with the building owner and EDGE Studio architects to sponsor the project… While working on *2 Canoes,* a hanging sculpture for the café of the new Sherman Health Hospital in Elgin, IL, **Matthew Burke** thought back to the wearisome weeks he spent eating in a hospital cafeteria after his first son was born. "I was [then] emotionally and physically exhausted, and I tried to put myself back in that head-space as I was making this work." Made of natural materials for a "reassuring, nurturing tone," the piece echoes the splendor of a nearby 15-acre geothermal lake… A tree symbolizing family and community is depicted in *North, South and Home,* a six-panel stained-glass installation made for the ▸



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Phillips Manor Metro North train station in Sleepy Hollow, NY, by Manhattan artist **Joseph Cavalieri**, whose own local roots run deep. The work contains a haiku that can be read by commuters inside the overpass: "A gentle Hudson / whistle begins my journey / north and south and home"... The Dublin-based stained-glass artist **Peadar Lamb** has created his largest work to date, *Amharchlann Nua Eabhrach* ❻, detail, 100 square feet of windows gracing the facade of the Irish Repertory Theatre in New York City. It explores the "primal influences" on Irish and Irish-American theater, with imagery inspired by the plays of **Eugene O'Neill, Sean O'Casey, Brian Friel** and other masters.

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Applause

The **James Renwick Alliance** will present Distinguished Educator awards to ceramist **Randy Johnston**, wood turner **Mark Sfirri** ❸ and fiber artist **Yoshiko Wada** during its Spring Craft Weekend in Washington, DC, Apr. 23–25... The **Glass Art Society** will confer lifetime honors on two artists at the June 10 opening ceremony for its 40th annual conference in Louisville, KY–**Mark Peiser**, maker of *Portal* ❶, for exceptional achievement in the field, and **Tom Philabaum** ❺, who made *Circling* ❹, for outstanding service to GAS... *English Embroideries: 'Twixt Art and Nature 1500–1700* by **Andrew Morrall** and **Melinda Watt** won the **Textile Society of America**'s R. L. Shep Ethnic Textiles Book Award for 2009.

Passage

The weaver **Shirley Edidin**, a familiar face on the craft scene for decades, died December 15, age 85, in Jacksonville, FL, where she had lived since the 1950s. She was a longtime exhibitor at ACC Craft Shows (to the end, driving herself to the shows and setting up her own booth), and her work was featured at venues such as the Jacksonville Art Museum. The Florida Craftsmen honored her with a lifetime achievement award in 2003.—**J.L.**

❸ MT / Missoula
Missoula Art Museum
Marilyn Lysohir: Good Girls 1968
to May 30
missoulaartmuseum.org
For her 40th high school reunion, Lysohir reconnected with her youth by creating ceramic portraits of females in her graduating class, including *Marie Virostick*.

NY / New York
Joan B. Mirviss Ltd.
Liquid Porcelain: The Sculptural Art of Nagae Shigekazu
to Apr. 20
mirviss.com
Shigekazu's technical brilliance leads to whimsical shapes and curves mirroring each other.

NC / Asheville
Southern Highland Craft Guild
Charles Counts: A Retrospective Exhibition
to May 2
southernhighlandguild.org
A revealing look at a prolific artist through nearly 150 works–ceramics, quilts, drawings and paintings.

OR / Portland
Bullseye Gallery
e-merge 2010
to June 19
bullseyegallery.com
Rising talents in kiln-glass are recognized in this biennial sponsored by Bullseye Glass Company.



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Books

Three on Jewelry Art

Inspired Jewelry From the Museum of Arts and Design
By Ursula Ilse-Neuman
Museum of Arts and Design, New York, NY
ACC Editions, Woodbridge England
$55
antiquecollectorsclub. com

Loud Bones: The Jewelry of Nancy Worden
By Susan Noyes Platt and Michelle LeBaron
Tacoma Art Museum
University of Washington Press
Seattle, WA
$40 hardcover, $24.95 paperback
washington.edu/uwpress

Kiff Slemmons: Hands of the Heroes
Essay by Mija Riedel,
Poem by Bruce Whiteman
Published by Kiff Slemmons
$40
siennagallery.com
velvetdavinci.com
charonkransenarts.com

With artist-made contemporary jewelry now entering the collections of fine arts museums, it seems no longer subject to debate, if it ever was, that such work is art. It has not been debatable at the Museum of Arts and Design, which, since its inception in 1956, has championed this field. *Inspired Jewelry,* presenting more than 200 works from its choice collection—now on display in its entirety in MAD's Tiffany & Co. Foundation Jewelry Gallery—confirms the expanding boundaries of this vital art form.

The book is organized by decades, starting from the 1940s and extending into the 2000s. The works are presented dramatically one to a page, sometimes one to a spread, suggesting that no matter how small-scale they are in reality, they command attention for their original aesthetic vision and technical virtuosity. MAD is fortunate to own drawings of particular pieces, so that with necklaces by Herman Jünger and Boris Bally and brooches by Gio Pomodoro and Jamie Bennett, a reader can view the work and its related drawing on facing pages.

Ursula Ilse-Neuman, MAD's jewelry curator, emphasizes the variety and global reach of artist-made jewelry and sketches its major impulses or inspirations—modernist, surrealist, sculptural, organic, minimalist, conceptual, textural, painterly, narrative, technological, and more. What is most striking is the extraordinary diversity of materials jewelers employ beyond precious metals and gemstones—aluminum, stainless steel, wood, plastic, paper, glass, feathers and found objects, from watch faces to gun triggers.

Those interested in the combination of narrative vein with the ingenious use of natural and found objects in the jewelry of Nancy Worden and Kiff Slemmons—both in the MAD collection and both mentored by Ramona Solberg—will find much to explore and enjoy in two books that convey the technical complexity and psychological depth these artists have added to the direction pioneered by Solberg.

The works in *Loud Bones,* the catalog of Worden's recent 30-year retrospective, are primarily neckpieces, such as *The Good Omen* ❶, remarkable for their size and for the bold mixture of wildly disparate elements, combined by Worden through a variety of rigorous techniques to convey personal and political meanings relating to conflict and resolution. Insights into the turbulent life experience expressed in Worden's audacious works are offered by an art historian and a law professor who happens to be an authority on conflict resolution.

Poetry, visual and verbal, is at the heart of *Hands of the Heroes,* a limited-edition book by Slemmons based on a 1987–91 series: hand-shaped tributes to 43 public personages, among them, Freud, Nabokov, Emily Dickinson ❷, Anne Frank and Marie Curie. Each identity is suggested by the objects Slemmons includes within an amulet-like 3-by-2½-inch frame. The eloquent hands are interspersed with texts—fragments from the heroes, a poem by Bruce Whiteman—with ghostlike images of some of them. Offering satisfying insight into this artist's methods are photos of her overflowing yet still orderly worktable, her "sketchbook, laboratory, and active battleground for ideas."—B.S.

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Worden photo Rex Rystedt / Slemmons photo Rod Slemmons.



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.org / .edu

Ox-Bow at 100

The appeal of Ox-Bow, School of Art and Artists' Residency, in Michigan, has been its bucolic seclusion and scenic beauty, the better to foster its mission "to serve as a haven for the creative process through instruction, example and community." ❶

Ox-Bow was founded in 1910 by Frederick Fursman and Walter Marshall Clute, artists associated with the School of the Art Institute in Chicago (SAIC) who sought a respite from their clamorous city (and from the formal ideas of the Institute) and found it in Saugatuck, a town surrounded by dunes, forests, lakes, rivers and a lagoon. There they began teaching summer painting classes. Ox-Bow was first called the Summer School of Painting, though craft courses were introduced early on, in makeshift studios; the first formal studios for specific media were not built until the 1960s, '70s, '80s, and they continue to be added.

Today, Ox-Bow's 115-acre campus hosts programs in ceramics ❷, glass, painting and drawing, papermaking, printmaking and metals. More than 400 students (from ages 18 to 90) come to the campus in the summer to be mentored and engaged by 60 faculty, 10 visiting artists and 15 residents. (In the last four years, winter sessions and a fall residency were introduced.) Among the numerous figures, who have been students, instructors or resident artists are Lenore Tawney, Joseph Siegenthaler, Nick Cave, Paul Marioni, Hank Adams and Tim Barrett. A constant for the school from the start has been its relationship with SAIC, formalized in a sponsorship agreement in 1995.

For summer 2010, the craft courses being offered include ceramics with Andrea and John Gill, glass with Ryan Gothrup and jewelry with Anne Mondro. Ox-Bow has announced a Centennial Residency Contest, in which two-week residencies for summer 2010 will be awarded through a portfolio competition to three artists. Among several centennial activities scheduled in Chicago and around Michigan are three exhibitions of works by Ox-Bow artists at the Grand Rapids Art Museum (June 4–Aug. 22).

Studying craft at Ox-Bow, notes the executive director Jason Kalajainen, "provides a unique opportunity for artists who work in non-craft-based media to find avenues to engage these materials and traditions in their studio practices, as well as offer those who have strictly craft-based practices to move beyond that tradition and think about using the media in new ways."—**B.S.**

ox-bow.org



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Ox-Bow photos courtesy of Ox-Bow archives.

PA / Wayne
Wayne Art Center
ArtQuilt Elements 2010
Apr. 17–May 19
wayneart.org
Chosen for their conceptual qualities and technical prowess, the quilts of 50 artists from 25 states and four foreign countries grace the center's gallery.

❹ TN / Memphis
National Ornamental Metal Museum
Iron: Twenty Ten
May 29–Aug. 29
metalmuseum.org
Unique perspectives on blacksmithing, including Joshua Goss's *Shell Format #7*, are offered by some of the best in the field.

TX / San Angelo
San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts
San Angelo National Ceramic Competition
Apr. 16–June 20
samfa.org
This popular biennial with works by U.S., Canadian and Mexican artists exploits a range of attitudes.

WI / Racine
Racine Art Museum
Therman Statom: Outside the Box
to July 25
ramart.org
Groups of collaged and painted glass boxes, with interior forms recalling everyday objects, line RAM's 60-foot-long sidewalk-level gallery.



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Apr/May 10

Council News

Show Time

The American Craft Council's 34th annual flagship show at the Baltimore Convention Center this February featured the newest jewelry, clothing, furniture and home décor by 700 of the country's leading craft artists, such as last year's winner Ani Kasten, who created *Bottle Still Life* ❶. Beyond shopping opportunities, there were also new networking events on wholesale days and live demonstrations during the retail portion of the show. Other attractions included a new Lawn & Garden section and an expanded Alt-Craft section on retail days.

More than 225 of the nation's most respected artists displayed their wares at the American Craft Council Show in Atlanta, Mar. 12-14, as the largest indoor craft show in the Southeast returned to the Cobb Galleria Centre. For the first time in that show, Alt-Craft artists shared the stage with veteran exhibitors. A benefit preview was presented in partnership with the Museum of Design Atlanta.

Nearly 250 local and national artists put the spotlight on a vibrant craft community when the American Craft Council Show takes place at the St. Paul RiverCentre, Apr. 16–18, an event even more significant this year since the Council will move to Minneapolis in July.

Save the dates for the San Francisco Show: Aug. 13–15.

On the Move

The board and staff of the American Craft Council are preparing for the Council's relocation from New York City to Minneapolis this summer. "Minneapolis, with its rich craft traditions and energetic artist communities, provides tremendous opportunities for the Council to enhance its contributions to art and craft communities at a national and local level," notes board chair Leilani Lattin Duke.

Education

The second in a series of "Making, Meaning and the Marketplace" symposiums funded through the Windgate Charitable Trust will take place at the University of Minnesota on Apr. 16, to coincide with the Council's St. Paul Show. Rob Forbes, the founder of Design Within Reach, will give a lecture. E-mail education@craftcouncil.org.

The final symposium, "Artonomics: New Tools for Artists and Designers," will be at the Rhode Island School of Design, Apr. 29–30. John Maeda, RISD's president, will be the keynoter, and a panel discussion moderated by Julie Lasky, editor of the online magazine *Change Observer* and former editor in chief of I.D., will look at new tool models to help articulate marketplace opportunities and disseminate ideas.—C.K.

In a Box Culture

STORY BY
Janet Koplos

Yamamura Shinya (in the Japanese style, his family name appears first) learned lacquer work in art school. He did not come to this age-old medium through family inheritance or an apprenticeship. When he was in high school, he saw a black box with a bird drawn in a white line; he says he "fell in love" then, but only later learned that it was a lacquer surface inlaid with eggshell. He studied at the Kanazawa College of Art, in a district of Japan famed for lacquer. There was only one other student specializing in the medium, yet there were three instructors–esteemed local craftsmen–teaching the traditional techniques.

Japan has a long history of such work (the European term for lacquered furniture was "japanned"). It is correctly called *urushi*, for the Asian shrub whose sap yields a substance that functions both as a glue, holding gold flakes, mother-of-pearl or eggshell to a wood base, and as a tough finish that, after it cures in a humid atmosphere, is impervious to alcohol and solvents.

Yamamura first tried working at a relatively large scale. In that effort, he may have been inspired by works in various mediums that he saw in American Craft magazine; the periodical was very important to him when he studied in Kanazawa, which is located on the Japan Sea coast, a region sometimes called the "back" of Japan, which may have seemed isolated especially because he was a Tokyo native. His early work consisted of abstract sculptural forms. The exquisite finish of lacquer could give coherence and impact to the shapes.

About five years ago, Yamamura began making boxes when he was invited to participate in an exhibition on the theme of the tea ceremony. It was boxes that he displayed in his first American show, at Ippodo Gallery in New York's Chelsea, last November. Maybe the shift was inevitable, for in an interview at the gallery he called Japan "a box culture" (documents and objects are stored in wooden boxes). As if to illustrate, the deep sill of a gallery window held five elegant boxes each tied with a woven cord, the type that hold



Left:
Fruit of the Moon, 2009, incense container (closed and open), abalone, gold powder, silver powder, 1 9/10 x 3 4/5 x 2 in.

Photos courtesy of Ippodo Gallery.

Yamamura Shinya's goal for these tiny lacquer boxes is beauty—an object that people will want to keep and hold forever.





Above left and right:
November Mountain, red lacquer, gold powder, 2½ x 3 ⅓ x 2 ⅓ in., and *May Mountain*, green lacquer, gold powder, 2 x 3⅗ x 2⅗ in., incense containers, 2009.

Below:
Sacred Jewel, 2009, incense container, green lacquer, eggshell, 2¾ x 2¾ x 2¾ in.



traditional artworks. They introduced notions of protection, layering and enclosure that the lacquer works furthered.

Yamamura's boxes were identified as "incense box" or "tea box." Yet they were not entirely practical, for he is now obsessed with smallness. The gallery featured 20 narrow pedestals, each presenting a single container small enough to be held in one hand. They could be said to speak in the language of "boxness" without restriction to rectilinear shape.

Two (one red and one green) resembled craggy mountain peaks with rough, almost lava-like surfaces. Another evoked an egg embellished with curlicues, and another took the shape of a melon slice, the fruit's pulp represented by iridescent chips of mother of pearl. One vertical box was surfaced with a textured pattern recalling Van Gogh's *Starry Night*. A tiny, lidded bowl displayed a glossy black top, red ribbed sides and insides speckled with gold flakes. The gold repeats at the center of the exterior base, which one discovers only through handling. Another was a silo shape with a flattened cone lid and eggshell among its surface materials; it breaks down into three minuscule containers. One imagines this structure containing not agricultural products but single jewels.

Barbara Brennan Ford, former curator of Japanese art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, told me that most lacquer artists specialize in one type of work–either the red and black called *negoro* or the sparkling inlay called *maki-e*. But Yamamura does both. Also, most lacquer artists concentrate only on surface, but he is equally interested in form. He starts by drawing shapes and then makes a model in clay so that he can measure his wood and avoid waste. He roughs out the form by machine and finishes it with hand carving. He works only in Japanese cypress. The completed objects are so tiny and so thin-walled (but strengthened by the urushi, remember) that they seem feather light. His goal, Yamamura told me, is beauty. He wants to make an object that people will want to keep and hold forever.

The writer Janet Koplos recently served as guest editor of American Craft. *She is co-author of* Makers: A History of American Studio Craft, *due in July from University of North Carolina Press.*

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ippodogallery.com

Plane Views

STORY BY
Glenn Gordon

Below:
The Veritas® NX 60 block plane refines the feel and operation of a small plane that fits in the palm of the hand. The lever cap integrates cleanly with the plane's body, made of a rust-resistant alloy of iron and nickel. The speed-lines and hollows are for grip.



The new wave of toolmakers has not merely been reproducing classic old tools but refining them to improve their performance.

Among the thousands of beautifully made patent models that filled the warehouses of the U.S. Patent Office during the Industrial Revolution's great flowering of invention were many for woodworking hand tools of no little ingenuity. Refinements in design made possible through advances in manufacturing in steel and iron in the later 19th and early 20th centuries brought substantial improvements to tools whose form and function, though long established, had not until then been standardized and produced in factories.

In the United States the preeminent manufacturers of the new and continuously improved Bailey or Stanley metal plane and its offshoots were the venerable Stanley Works in New Britain, CT, and the Millers Falls Company in Millers Falls, MA. In England, mostly in the steelmaking city of Sheffield, were tool works whose names are still familiar to woodworkers today—Record, Norris, Spiers and Marples. With the growing popularity of portable power tools after the Second World War, however, the quality of the hand tools made by these old-guard manufacturers went into



Right:
Bridge City's muscular shoulder planes, of bronze or stainless steel, are capable of extremely fine adjustment and control. Their sinuous contours, swellings and sculpted hollows exert an almost erotic appeal on woodworkers.

NX 60 photo courtesy of Lee Valley Tools.

Below:
Lie-Nielsen's No. 4 smoothing plane is a reincarnation, greatly improved, of the classic Stanley Bedrock bench plane. It comes in ductile iron or, shown here, a hard-wearing manganese bronze alloy that has a nice warmth in the hand. Its cutting iron is cryogenically treated steel.



a decline. Some of them ceased manufacturing entirely. If you aspired to serious woodworking you sometimes couldn't find the tools to do it with.

The onrush of technology, however, hasn't made good hand tools obsolete any more than it has rendered wood a thing of the past—at least not yet. About 30 years ago, things started to pick up again, thanks to a second flowering of invention in the realm of traditional hand tools, particularly hand planes. The tool has yet to come along to trump the practicality of a hand plane: there are many operations in the making of a cabinet, a violin, a boat, or a bamboo fly rod where the right tool to use—the only tool that makes any sense, in fact—is a plane.

The new wave of toolmakers has not merely been reproducing classic old tools but refining them to improve their performance. Studying what a tool actually does, small companies of entrepreneurial woodworkers, machinists, blacksmiths and bricoleurs have been reengineering the action, the mechanics, the metallurgy and sometimes the ergonomics—the very shape of the tool in the hand—of the familiar old forms of the whole panoply of woodworking tools, not only of hand planes, but of chisels, handsaws, even hammers. Three of the leading manufacturers of this new generation are Lee Valley & Veritas Tools in Ottawa, Canada, Lie-Nielsen Toolworks in Warren, ME, and Bridge City Tool Works, in Portland, OR. Veritas has made a specialty of radically reimagining the form and mechanics of hand planes and a host of other tools. Lie-Nielsen's planes, produced both in cast iron and in manganese bronze, are largely derived from the classic Stanley archetypes but have greatly improved adjustment mechanisms. Bridge City Tool Works makes, among other items, special-purpose molding and shoulder planes and multi-planes almost baroque in their complexity and in the extravagant attention given to a tool's detail and finish.

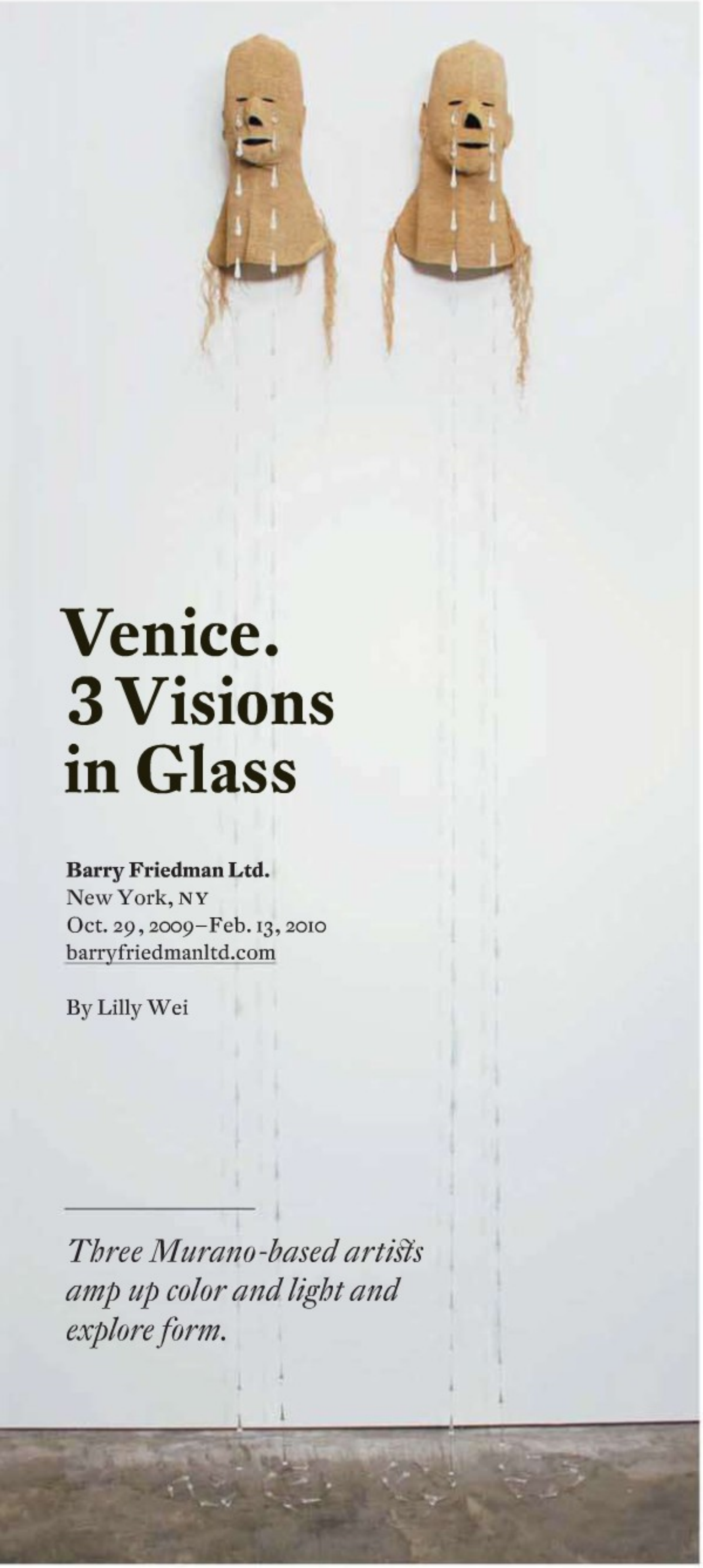
The resurgence of interest in the elemental implements of woodworking carries more than a hint of nostalgia for the good old days. Even while these tools are manufactured with sophisticated CNC equipment, they feed a longing for respite from the nonstop onslaught of tech. Exquisitely finished, far more so than the tools most blokes and proletarians toiled with to make a living, they recall the fancy brass and rosewood "gentlemen's tools" that used to be advertised in British catalogs, catering to chaps who liked to dabble in woodworking in the same way Marie Antoinette sometimes liked to dress up and play at being a shepherdess.

The intent of these contemporary toolmakers from the beginning has been to make tools that not simply work better (which theirs do in spades) but that are fine works of craft in their own right. Beautifully made, seductive both purely as sculpture and as objects that exist to be used, these tools ask your hands to make things with them as fine as they are themselves.

Glenn Gordon, a writer, furniture maker and photographer in St. Paul, MN, contributes to such publications as Woodwork, Public Art Review, Color *and* Black & White.

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leevalley.com
lie-nielsen.com
bridgecitytools.com



Venice. 3 Visions in Glass

Barry Friedman Ltd.
New York, NY
Oct. 29, 2009–Feb. 13, 2010
barryfriedmanltd.com

By Lilly Wei

Three Murano-based artists amp up color and light and explore form.

Left:
Cristiano Bianchin
2 Masks, 2001,
crocheted hemp, glass,
105 x 11 x 10 in.

"Venice. 3 Visions in Glass" featuring Cristiano Bianchin, Yoichi Ohira and Laura de Santillana (who have shown together a number of times) offers viewers a profusion of innovative forms and gorgeous colors. All three hail from Venice and work on Murano, the fabled center of European fine glass production. Although Bianchin, Ohira and de Santillana are primarily glass artists, this expansive touring exhibition presents their highly esteemed and technically superb work as art rather than decorative objects and celebrates the extraordinary range of their resolutions. Glass, while long cherished by collectors, has only recently been accepted as a medium for fine art as more and more contemporary artists in every genre (many invited to Murano to produce their projects in collaboration with master glassmakers) embrace it, seduced by its enormous expressive potential.

One of the most striking characteristics of Cristiano Bianchin's (b. 1963, Venice) production is the almost inhuman perfection of his smooth cold-worked surfaces and his sleight-of-eye finesse as glass, in his hands, assumes the appearance, say, of onyx, carnelian and marble. His elegant vessels–designated "urns" in a recent series in regal hues–glow with an interior light while others are more opaque but equally arresting, often topped by tiny finials or primitive figurines and are greatly influenced by African as well as Native American art. At times, his pieces are partially swaddled in crocheted hemp, a signature combination of adamant glass and pliant organic fibers. Bianchin's vessels recall canopic jars, reliquaries and other ritual objects, as do his smaller implements and abstract constructions–the latter often evoking fertility figurines. Also included are two woven hemp masks hung high on a wall, a double line of crystalline tears falling to the floor from the empty eye openings. *Silenzio,* 2000, an effigy of woven hemp (the artist says it's of himself) lying on a pallet surrounded by objects, offers a tableau of multiple readings, including that of the artist as a passive vehicle until animated by creative forces.

Yoichi Ohira (b. 1946, Japan) has lived in Venice for over 35 years and also combines cultural legacies, in his case, that of traditional Japanese vessels with Venetian color and techniques. While his glassworks remain essentially objects, rarely

Photos © Barry Friedman Ltd.





higher than 12 inches, they are exceptionally glamorous ones. The majority of his more than 100 pieces in the show are based on the vase form, although the sparkling clear-glass *Cristallo Sommerso,* a new series, was derived from another vessel, the torqued human body. Much praised for his experimentation with color, Ohira has developed a breathtaking palette. His works enclose a kaleidoscope of hues with the fire of jewels as seen in his *Calle* and *Finestre* sequences, here inspired by the streets of Venice or Kyoto: the sky glimpsed through a long sliver of space between buildings, a garden, a house, all seen through a window in the vessel. *Notturno Veneziano,* 2009, is another beauty, its deep, incandescent blue that of Venice as night falls. An earlier work, *Quattro Lune con una Foschia,* 2006, relies less on light for its effect and resembles a landscape, say, on a Momoyama screen. A cylindrical shape with a flat lid, its central black band is ornamented with four phases of the moon in gold and encircled by what appears to be a strip of malachite and coral in a tour de force of material trompe l'œil.

The least dependent on traditional forms, as evidenced by this showing, Laura de Santillana (b. 1955, Venice) is represented by glass sculpture, hybrids between sculpture and painting and installations. A recent series, *Meteors,* was inspired by battered oilcans washed onto a beach. Placed on the floor, they suggest a field of lustrous, eroded boulders from space. More arresting in terms of vivid color are her signature *Tokyo-gas* and *Flags*. These beautiful pieces resemble Rothko paintings—as is frequently noted—and other Color Field abstractions, although their duo-tone or triple-tone bands, collapsed between clear glass, are much more brilliant, harnessing actual light and carefully weighted so the slabs are freestanding. Softly glowing, they are one answer to the often-asked question: where did the aura in a work of art go after modernism? De Santillana's perfect *Bodhi* vases, some with mirrored interiors, could be the platonic embodiment of a sacred vessel and refer to the positions assumed by Buddhist monks in prayer.

While less might have been more, "3 Visions" is a stunning showcase of ways to amp up color and light and explore form as it plays with the once canonical distinctions between art, craft and design.

Lilly Wei is a New York-based art critic.

Top Left:
Yoichi Ohira
Cristallo Sommerso N. 54—Scolpito Vase, 2008, hand-blown glass canes, partial battuto and inciso surface, 11⅗ x 4¾ x 4¾ in.

Top Right:
Yoichi Ohira,
Avorio Vase, 2004, hand-blown glass canes with murrine, 10¼ x d. 7 in.
Maestro Livio Serena and Maestro Giacomo Barbini

Bottom Left:
Laura de Santillana,
Tokyo-ga XIV Bluino/Rosso Scuro, 2008, hand-blown and shaped glass, 12⅝ x 9⅜ x 1⅝ in.

Bottom Right:
Laura de Santillana,
Tokyo-ga XII (Blu Nero/Rubino), 2008, hand-blown and shaped glass, 12⅝ x 9 x 1¾ in.





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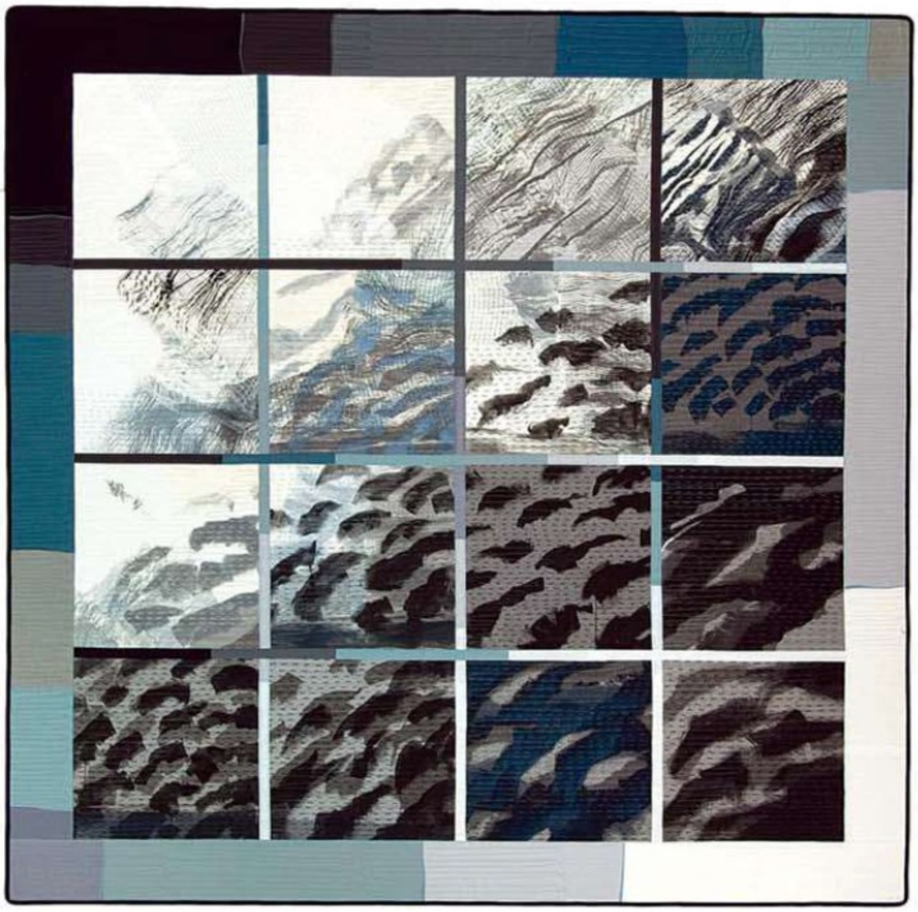
The exhibition is at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO (Mar. 6–Aug. 15, 2010), and tours to the Naples Museum of Art, FL (Oct. 1, 2010–Jan. 15, 2011), and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris (Mar. 23–Sept. 4, 2011). The hardcover catalog in English and French is $75 from Barry Friedman Ltd., and Arnoldsche, arnoldsche.com.

Perspectives: Art, Craft, Design & the Studio Quilt

International Quilt Study Center & Museum
Lincoln, NE
Nov. 21, 2009–May 9, 2010

By Glen R. Brown

If surface stitching has its lineage in a craft context and the utilitarian nature of batting, the works in "Perspectives" suggest that the studio quilt perpetuates the technique principally for its expressive potential.



With nearly two dozen contemporary works from the International Quilt Study Center and Museum's permanent collection, "Perspectives: Art, Craft, Design & the Studio Quilt" generates a visual impact consonant with the monumentality of the museum's spacious galleries. As expected, the center's holdings–anchored by an initial 1997 gift of almost a thousand quilts from the Ardis and Robert James collection and augmented by more than a decade of acquisitions from major artists–have furnished a top-notch survey of work by prominent makers of the contemporary studio quilt. The exhibition's organizers, Michael James and Sandra Sider, have, however, aspired to more than a dazzling display of the center's gems. As its title suggests, "Perspectives" situates the quilts in relation to almost a dozen paintings, sculptures and works in glass, precious metal and ceramics in order to stimulate reflection on the relationship of the studio quilt to the categories of art, craft and design.

The first work one encounters, Terrie Hancock Mangat's *Lake Superior Stick Bed and Quilt,* serves both as reminder of the quilt's utilitarian origins and comment on how dramatically its role has been recast by the studio quilt movement. Consisting of a quilt intricately sewn from twig-shaped patches of fall-colored fabric and neatly draped over a bed with headboard painted in matching autumnal hues and encrusted like a reliquary with segments of branches, the piece seems more easily reconciled with sculpture than domestic furniture. Context–both the white-walled gallery space in which Mangat's work is situated and the studio tradition in which her quilt fundamentally participates–is undoubtedly a key factor in the impression. In this respect, the piece functions as an important, perhaps even necessary prelude to the other quilts, all of which were from the outset destined to grace gallery walls and never touch a mattress.

The exhibition invokes the issue of art most directly through comparison between quilts and paintings, particularly those in the vein of geometric abstraction. The optical vibration of Ellen Oppenheimer's *PW Block #5* rivals the effect of disembodied color and abstract energy in a juxtaposed Synchromist painting by Morgan Russell, and the dusky hues and geometrically subdivided rippling pattern of Jan Myers-

Photos courtesy of the International Quilt Study Center & Museum.



Newbury's *MOOG* parallel the twilight palette and Cubist organization of a nearby Marguerite Zorach painting. As evident as the similarities, the contrasts between these materially different works immediately reveal one of the principal formal and expressive assets of the studio quilt. Surfaces that in the paintings can be conceived only illusionistically as a composition of separate planes are physically pieced together in the quilts; the resulting dynamic surfaces complement the optical recession and projection of color in ways the continuous plane of a stretched canvas cannot.

This physical surface dynamism is exploited to heighten the crisp independence of shapes in Deirdre Amsden's pieced composition *Colourwash Spillikins,* to suggest the seething, insectile energy of disintegrating color planes in Pamela Studstill's *Number #47* and to invigorate the pulse of the projecting registers of folded triangles of cloth and quilted bands in Teresina Gai's *Pantelleria.* A subtler employment of surface dynamism to induce tension between two- and three-dimensional components and heighten a carefully crafted optical illusion occurs in Mary Anne Jordan's somber grayscale *Dot Flag.* Here the bleeding of dye downward from a series of dots becomes shadow-like, and, in collaboration with concentric stitching around the individual dots and a slight swelling, produces the impression of a composition in relief.

If surface stitching has its lineage in a craft context and the utilitarian nature of batting, the works in "Perspectives" suggest that the studio quilt perpetuates the technique principally for its expressive potential. Pauline Burbidge's *Wind over Water,* deliberately eschewing vibrant color in favor of a quiet range of gray and pale blue, conveys the rhythmic, liquid motion of ripples as much through patterns of stitching as through painted elements of the composition. Indeed, it is ironically in those instances in which stitching is combined with painterly effects—Chris Wolf Edmonds's *Through the Trees: Solstice Moon,* Dorothy Caldwell's *A Lake/A Bowl,* Therese May's *Sawblade* or Barbara Watler's *Autumn 1-4,* for example—that the studio quilt seems most distinct from painting and most concretely defined as a medium.

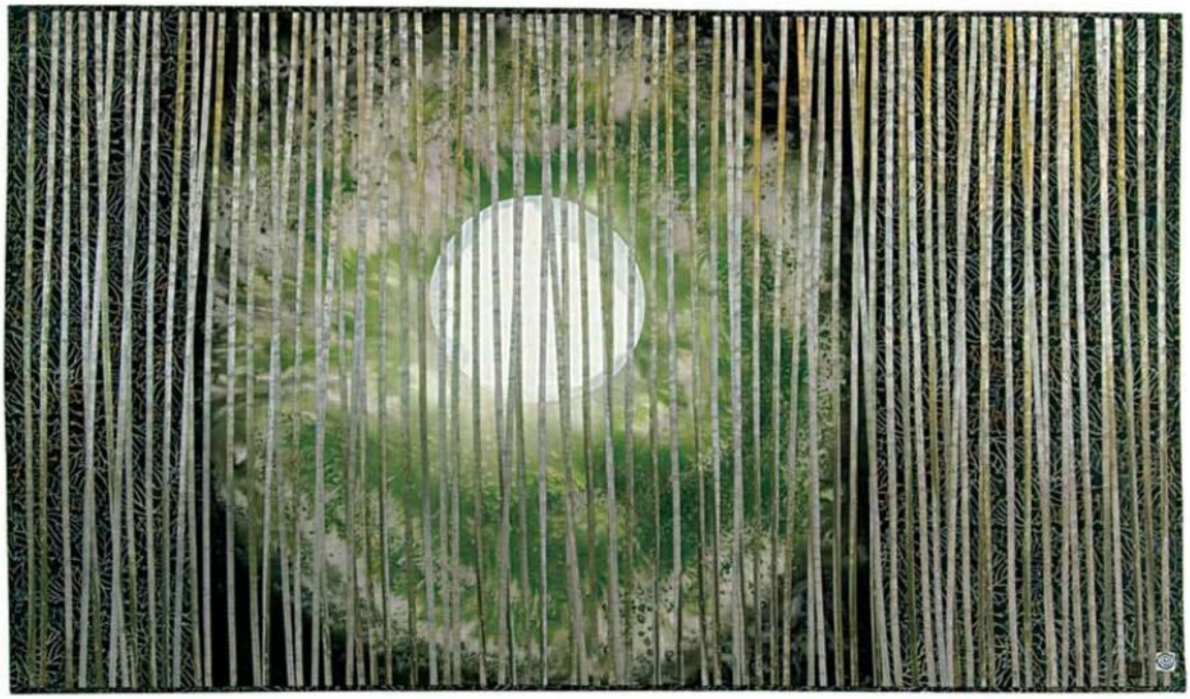
Glen R. Brown is professor of art history and associate head of the art department at Kansas State University.

The catalog is $9.95, quiltstudystore.net.

Top:
Ellen Oppenheimer
PW Block #5, 2003,
65 x 65 in.

Opposite:
Pauline Burbidge
Wind over Water,
2003, 72 x 71½ in.

Bottom:
Chris Wolf Edmonds
Through the Trees: Solstice Moon, 2001,
39 x 67½ in.



Sue Aygarn-Kowalski: Striking a Balance

Mobilia Gallery
Cambridge, MA
Feb. 2–27, 2010
mobilia-gallery.com

By Christine Temin

If I had a hammer, I'd make sure it was one by Sue Aygarn-Kowalski. Her work is exquisitely crafted sculpture, but much of it is also tools designed to function, whether it be for pounding a chicken cutlet or banging a nail into the wall. The 20 Striking Tools in this exhibition were made of opulent materials: exotic woods like yellowheart, purpleheart, cocobolo, pink ivory wood and ebony; and metals including brass, copper and sterling silver. Their individual designs were lavish, with stripes and spirals the motifs of choice. The horizontal stripes in boldly contrasting colors reminded me of the exterior of the cathedral in Siena. There was also a hammer with scalloped edges on the handle that made it particularly satisfying to hold. And you could hold things at this show. Touching is the point. The sheer weight of the hammers was gratifying. These are tools that could do the job if you could bear to get them messy before displaying them as art.

Aygarn-Kowalski also fashions works out of steel railroad spikes that, with their gorgeously weathered textures, carry histories with them that her brand-new hammers can't. The shape vocabularies are akin to those in the hammers, with twists and curlicues, everything implying some sort of motion. The function of some of these works is obscure, inviting the viewer to invent one. A few of them might very well make excellent cheese knives.

Among the largest and most elaborate pieces in the show were a teapot in the form of an anvil; a level made of teak, pine, silver, brass and steel; and a copper and sterling *Balance,* a measuring device surely fit for a palace.

Aygarn-Kowalski definitely has a sense of humor. Consider *Guy* and *Stella,* among the most precious works in the show. *Guy,* made of brass, copper, sterling silver and steel, is wearing a brownish metal suit attached with tiny nails. At hip level he wears a belt with a carrier for another tool, in this case a nail. *Stella,* of brass and sterling silver with a head like an overgrown acorn and a ruffled silver bonnet and dress is a riot. She looks uppity. Were you to use this "diva" as a hammer you'd better have a clear idea what you wanted—otherwise, she'd definitely get the upper hand, even though she hasn't *got* a hand. ✚

Christine Temin, formerly chief art critic for the Boston Globe *until 2005, now writes on the arts for numerous publications.*



Left:
Guy, Spring-loaded center-punch, 2003, bronze, copper, steel, sterling silver, lathe-turned, hand-finished, roller-printed screen patterns, rivet and tap and die button construction, 7 x 1¼ x 1¼ in.

Right:
Striking Tools, 2008-2010, materials include brass, silver, Delrin, steel, nylon, yellowheart, purpleheart and cocobolo woods, largest 13 x 2½ x 2½.



Photos by Dean Powell.

Brian Ferrell: Static

Appalachian Center for Craft
Smithville, TN
Jan. 14–Feb. 18, 2010
tntech.edu

By Craig Nutt



Cantilevered structures owe their aesthetic appeal to their strong horizontal lines, freed from the visual clutter of vertical supports. It is precisely the perceptual tension, the sense of precariousness, caused by the lack of visible support that makes cantilevered structures exhilarating. Frank Lloyd Wright famously exploited bold cantilevered terraces in one of his most thrilling buildings, Fallingwater, where Brian Ferrell did a stint as a guide while he was a student, and where he had a solo show in 2008.

Ferrell explores that perceptual tension in the appropriately titled "Static." Cantilevered chairs, tables and shelf surfaces perch atop or intersect wishbone supports of carved and painted plywood. *Cabled Lounge Chair* is improbably supported by two legs that pivot on a wood base, creating tension between the promise of cushioned comfort, and the risk of collapse. Three slender steel cables strung between base and back prevent the chair from pitching forward, offering sitters a level of security commensurate with their perception of the cables' adequacy.

In a more lighthearted treatment of a similar construction, the top of *Cabled Coffee Table* seems spring-loaded. The effect is fun, despite (or because of) the possibility that in a careless moment one might catapult a beverage off the table. While the cables are critical to the function of these two pieces, in others they appear to have minor structural importance, being used more as purely visual elements to "glint and direct the eye between, around and beneath the surfaces," as Ferrell says in his artist's statement. The cables are most satisfying when they clearly serve both visual and structural ends. A pair of wall shelves in a corner deftly integrate a single cable. The smaller upper shelf supports the overhanging edge of the larger shelf on the adjacent wall, the cable connecting the two visually with a fine line.

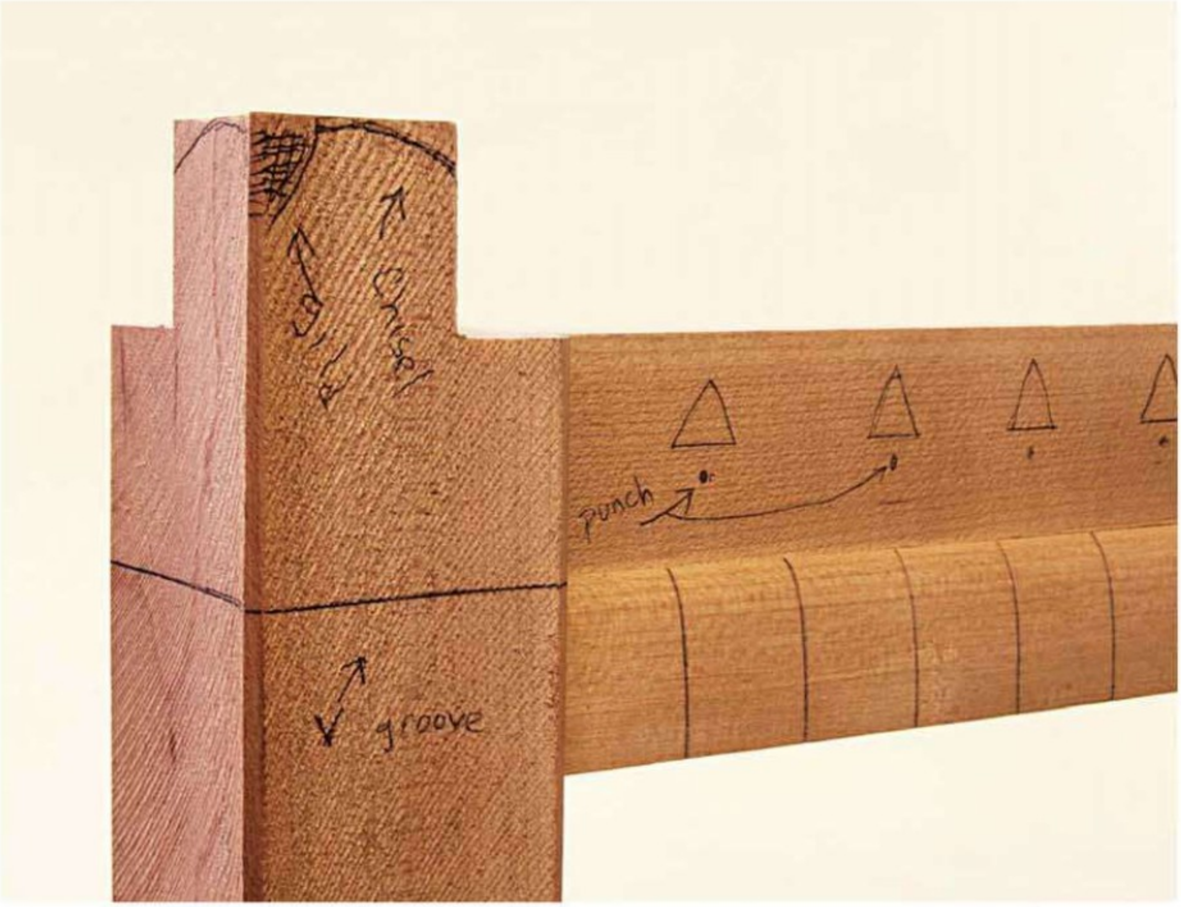
The shelves, tabletops and other flat surfaces are asymmetrical—mostly curved triangular or irregular trapezoidal shapes that sometimes seem more organic than their geometric underpinnings suggest. Ferrell's pewter-lined wood cups, tumblers, and cocktail glasses have similar shapes. Each of a set of espresso cups rests on an individual tray that is deeply undercut, except under the corner where the cup rests. It's up to the user, memory braced by a stiff cup of espresso, to place the cup on the correct corner. Freedom from support comes at a price. What would Mr. Wright say? ✤

Craig Nutt is a furniture maker/sculptor living in Kingston Springs, TN.

Top:
Sideboard Table, 2009, padauk, plywood, acrylic paint, steel cable, 33 x 57 x 12 in.

Bottom:
Cabled Lounge Chair, 2008, padauk, painted wood, artificial leather, cable, 36 x 26 in x 38 in.





Opposite:
Charles Radtke's *Sarcophagus #5*, 2009, overall and detail, maple, tiger maple, catalpa, ebony, sepele, copper gilding, 31¾ x 43 x 19½ in.

Left:
Mock-up of the piece showing Radtke's use of drawing in pencil.

Get Out the Lead

ESSAY BY
Glenn Adamson

What is the most important tool known to the crafts? Chisels are widely used in working metal, wood, and stone, and they come in a kaleidoscopic range of shapes. They are the ultimate example of the right tool for the right job. Aficionados prize planes above all, perhaps because they are beautifully shaped, but also because they stand for that key craft value of making true. The loom, with its simple idea of intersecting two unlike threads, is almost more than a tool, a world of its own where anything seems possible. And where would we be without the potter's wheel and the lathe, whose circular motion is the springboard to an infinite range of forms? Even so, I have another nominee: the pencil.

For the past year I have been keeping a blog on the website of the Victoria and Albert Museum. Entitled "From Sketch to Product," it gives me a chance to write informally about the processes by which design objects come into being. One of the ideas that I have been exploring is the interdependency of hand skills and mass production.

Craft is often thought of as the opposite of industry, but in many cases it is the first step in the cycle of product creation. This might involve making a prototype in clay or wood, or building a machine tool that will be used to make thousands of identical objects. Drawing a sketch or a precisely measured plan of an object is another obvious example of this indirect workmanship. The materials used to make such a rendering often have a dramatic, and unacknowledged, impact on the final design. It may be no coincidence that many industrial design firms shifted from airbrush to felt-tip markers in the 1960s, just as cars, appliances and even architecture were losing their gentle curves in favor of a new hard-edge look.

Nearly all designers draw, of course, and when they do so they are using their own skilled hands. It's tempting, therefore, to think of renderings as a genre of craft object in their own right. Be that as it may, craft and drawing have long had tense relations. In the 18th century, images of furniture and metalwork published in pattern books were

Mock-up photo Vicki Reed.

notoriously hard to reproduce in three-dimensional form. As time wore on, techniques of mechanical drawing were developed to address this problem of translation, but precision came at a price. As rendering became the specialized province of engineers and technical draftsmen, skilled artisans no longer exercised discretion at their own workbenches.

So what does artisanal drawing look like? Here, I take inspiration from Henry Petroski (see page 46) in one of his classic books on engineering, *The Pencil: A History of Design and Circumstance.* As he writes, the cultural value of this humble tool is to be found, in large part, in its very impermanence. Unlike an ink pen, the pencil is a tool for thinking tentatively. It literally draws its user into an active process, in which hand and mind work in concert.

So when artisans take up their pencils, they are as likely to draw right on the workpiece as in a sketchbook. I've asked a few makers about this, and they are unanimous on the point: if you're about to cut a form out of wood, or hammer it into metal, there's no substitute for laying down a path in pencil first. The Wisconsin cabinetmaker Charles Radtke, who makes exquisite case furniture informed by Art Deco masters like Ruhlmann, describes his process this way: "My typical approach is to have some vague idea as to leg shape, then I oversize the legs, do all the joinery, and then come back with the sharp No. 4 pencil and draw 'mock-up lines' right on the piece. It is the only way to get a true sense of the scale."

The value that Radtke finds in vagueness is telling. Fine workmanship like his is certainly characterized by precision in the end. But that's true of objects made through automation, too. To understand what craft is all about, we have to go back earlier in the making process. A few uncertain lines inscribed into wood may not look like much. Unlike a blueprint or mechanical drawing, they would be difficult for another person to interpret. But it's in these stray marks, indecisive and open-ended, that craft finds its distinctive voice.

Glenn Adamson is head of graduate studies at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and co-editor of the Journal of Modern Craft.

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www.vam.ac.uk/things-to-do/blogs/sketch-product/home



A few uncertain lines inscribed into wood may not look like much.... But it's in these stray marks, indecisive and open-ended, that craft finds its distinctive voice.



Sarcophagus #5 photos Charles Stevens.



Right and following page: *Beauty in a Hard Place*, 2006 (detail and full view), high-temperature porcelain with abraded color, Moretti glass, forged silica bronze, natural stone, 64 x 42 x 26 in.

Collection of Jack and Sarah Cecil.



One of Michael Sherrill's themes is the poignant beauty that may be found in living beings even in decay—the image of a rhododendron growing out of a rock, the "plant bound inside a rock, surviving."

STORY BY
Joan Falconer Byrd

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
Tim Barnwell

Natural Narratives



The visual world is Michael Sherrill's first language. "If I want to talk," he has said, "if I want to write my story, it is by creating dimensional things that tell a story in the world." The intensity of this desire to be heard is evident in the clarity and the conviction of Sherrill's voice throughout the varied phases of his career.

The son of a self-taught inventor who patented industrial processes and created machines out of his head, Sherrill was born into what he terms a "making culture." Standing now within sight of the 26-foot sculpture, *New Growth*, that he created for the Bank of America in Charlotte, NC, in 2003, he can look down the street to the empty building that once housed his father's machine shop. As a youngster in the 1950s he would sit on an island of clean cardboard on the floor of this shop, playing with "punched out pieces of steel and nails and old boards and hammers and tools. All around me there'd be milling machines going and lathes and metal shavings everywhere and my dad was walking around with a hot piece of metal in his hand and a pair of pliers."

Sherrill found school a daunting experience, but his humiliation was mitigated by his almost preternatural understanding of every material he touched; and his ability as "a maker of things" gave him an important identity. He was diagnosed with dyslexia in high school at about the same time as he discovered the medium of clay. "I just fell in love with clay… and the whole idea of seeing where it could go and where I could take it was just like an epiphany or a love affair." After studying art at a community college for a year and turning down a full scholarship to the Memphis Academy of Art because it had no ceramics program, he moved to western North Carolina in 1974, determined to become the best potter he could be.

A member of the "back to the land" movement, Sherrill could not afford to take classes at Penland School of Crafts, but his proximity to the school brought him in contact with artists who exemplified the world to which he wanted to belong. Reflecting their influence, he adopted the habit of making pots in series, pursuing a single idea through multiple variations: "That sense of interjecting discovery and play in my work became an early learning tool," he says, and a lasting sense of adventure has kept him engaged with clay over more than three decades. His connection with Penland has remained strong: he has exchanged information with artists in many media during his frequent teaching stints there, and he at last became a Penland student a few years ago when he took a flameworking class with the glass artist Paul Stankard.

Characterized by an edge of excitement and a young man's energy, Sherrill's early work was wheel-thrown, functional and predominantly earth-toned. He investigated salt-glazed stoneware and raku simultaneously, transferring techniques back and forth between processes and exploring different methods of altering the thrown form. He has characterized these early pieces as "potters' pots," in which the medium of clay and the processes of handling and firing took center stage.

Sherrill's handling of metal and glass, often involving tools he has originated, is as sure as his touch with clay. The materials are frequently difficult to distinguish; the work transcends medium.

Kohler photos Rich Maciejewski.





Left:
Michael Sherrill at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center in 2006 reassembling patterns used to make molds to cast metal. His purpose was to experiment with layered enamel the way he works with layered colors on porcelain.
The two towers, *Like Water,* of multilayered enamel on cast iron, each 7 x 2 ft., are in the JMKAC collection.





Left:
Sherrill's hands throwing a vessel using a small kidney-shaped rib (above) and faceting a tea bowl with a carving bow (below), both tools from his Mudtools line.

Right:
Fire Within, 2008, Night Flowers series, silica bronze, Moretti glass, mokume porcelain, 9 x 9 x 13 in.

Opposite:
Bloom at Night, 2008, Night Flowers series, silica bronze, Moretti glass, mokume porcelain, 15 x 9 x 9 in.



Over time he realized that he wanted to communicate to a wider audience, to "speak more than the potter's inside language." He had been transfixed by paintings in the museums in New York City and Washington, DC, as a child, and it became his ambition to make art of similar scope. Function lost its importance for him, and color became a preoccupation. Working in porcelain, he developed a bold, minimal style of vessel he has characterized as modernist. The matte surfaces of these pieces were, in Sherrill's words, "incandescent," with layers of contrasting colors of glaze floated one on top of the other. A striking group of flattened bottles in this style selected by Michael Monroe in 1993 for the White House collection of crafts brought Sherrill to national attention. These modernist vessels led to another series of thrown and altered pieces, faceted forms in which emphatic shifts in plane were heightened by color contrasts; dealing with foreshortened imagery, this series evoked the compositions of Matisse. In the articulation of the formal elements in both series, Sherrill added cleanly defined handles and spouts that he shaped in the most practical way, by using an extruder.

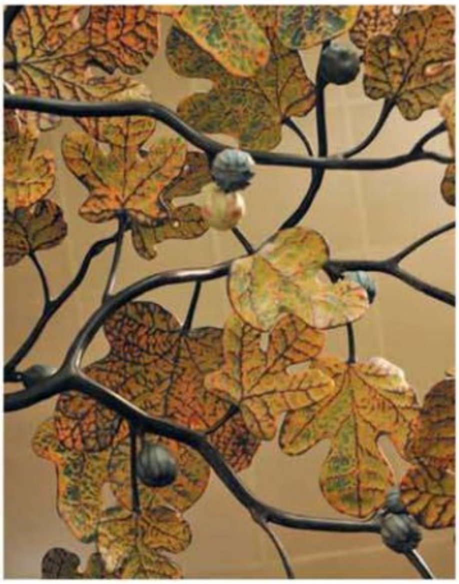
From the beginning, his love of materials was bound up with his love of tools. "Being a tool maker was just part of my nature and a creative part of my life that was not that separated from the making of art for me." Making tools stretched his imagination and broadened his view of the potential of clay. Now he built several variations of the extruder, one of which revolved like a potter's wheel. Challenged to "create stuff that doesn't look like it came out of an extruder at all," he gave the extruded forms the central place in his work and translated the altered vessel into sculptures of increasing complexity. He often constructed pieces along a single axis, as if conceived as a picture plane in which the space around the components functioned as a vital part of the abstract composition.

In 1997 Sherrill constructed a 5,000-square-foot studio with large windows overlooking 10 acres in a cove in the little town of Bat Cave. A few years later, he and his wife, Margery, settled their young family into the house on the property built onto a 19th-century log cabin. Sherrill has attributed the change of direction that has occurred in his work since this move to his sense of seeing nature for the first time. Almost immediately, the organization of his sculptural forms became less structured and more organic. His new shop has provided him with greatly increased capabilities as an artist, housing a complete clay facility, a metalworking shop that has the capacity to cast bronze, and a bench for flame-working glass.

At about the same time as his move to the new studio, Sherrill founded Mudtools. The business began with flexible ribs made from a specialized plastic and has expanded to offer a variety of innovative clay-working tools. It was his goal "to create systems so that somebody else can make the tools." The process he employs is to make a master tool and, just as his father did, walk around with it in his pocket and feel it and know, "Hey, this is the right shape." Only after this examination does he take the tool to someone capable of generating a computer model a machinist can use to make ›

Mudtools photos Margery Sherrill.







Left:
Mercy Seat, 2010, full view and detail, tree of high-temperature porcelain with abraded color, silica bronze forged and cast, 11 x 11 ft., natural quartz boulder.

Opposite:
Mouths to Feed, 2009, silica bronze, Moretti glass, mokume porcelain, 23 x 16 x 16 in.

Sherrill's current work exhibits a perfected attention to detail: far from betraying their origin, the extruded components are transformed into the substance of life. Their organically patterned, multicolored surfaces involve a painstaking process of layering and abrading and require four kiln firings.

molds. Since Sherrill has turned the daily operations of Mudtools over to an assistant, the business has contributed to his artistic freedom, allowing him to accept more extended commissions. The additional income also gave him the flexibility to accept the invitation to make a sculpture in Inchon, South Korea, during the International Ceramics Symposium in 2004 and to serve a three-month residency at the Kohler Arts Center in Sheboygan, WI, in 2006.

Sherrill's turn towards natural subject matter in his sculpture recalls the career of colorist David Hockney, a painter he admires, who turned to representational painting when he found abstraction too barren. Like Hockney, he has retained a brilliant palette and a strong sense of abstract form. His current work exhibits a perfected attention to detail: far from betraying their origin, the extruded components are transformed into the substance of life. Their organically patterned, multicolored surfaces involve a painstaking process of layering and abrading and require four kiln firings. In the interest of "expanding what clay can do" Sherrill has introduced metal into his sculptures: "How do I draw with small pieces of porcelain? Metal becomes the backbone for a line or an idea that I want to express." He has also introduced glass for its color and its heightened translucency; in images which convey the sexual energy generated by the presence of both male and female genitalia on a single plant, the most evocative elements are frequently crafted of flame-worked glass. Sherrill's handling of metal and glass, often involving tools he has originated, is as sure as his touch with clay. The materials are frequently difficult to distinguish; the work transcends medium.

The "natural narratives," as Sherrill terms them, are metaphors for his personal experience, which is also our own. One theme is the poignant beauty that may be found in living beings even in decay. *Beauty in a Hard Place,* 2006, is the image of a rhododendron growing out of a rock, the plant "bound inside a rock, surviving," while the theme of "beauty beyond the wound or the bruise" captures the persistence that allows a plant to bear fruit even after brutal breakage.

Unveiled this January in the Carolinas Medical Center-Mercy hospital in Charlotte, *Mercy Seat* consists of a level stone seat sheltered by an 11-foot-high tree whose trunk of cast bronze supports an umbrella of more than 300 porcelain leaves. In aesthetic terms, the sculpture is compelling for both perfection of detail and generosity of form. The artist's intent was to create a place of rest and renewal: the work conveys a sense of calm that approaches the spiritual. But however eloquent the voice, Sherrill believes a story is incomplete without a response. As the steps of great cathedrals have been worn by the passage of human feet, the sculpture will be finished when the bronze is polished by the warm touch of hands.

Joan Falconer Byrd heads the ceramics program at Western Carolina University. She has recently completed a biography of Harvey Littleton.

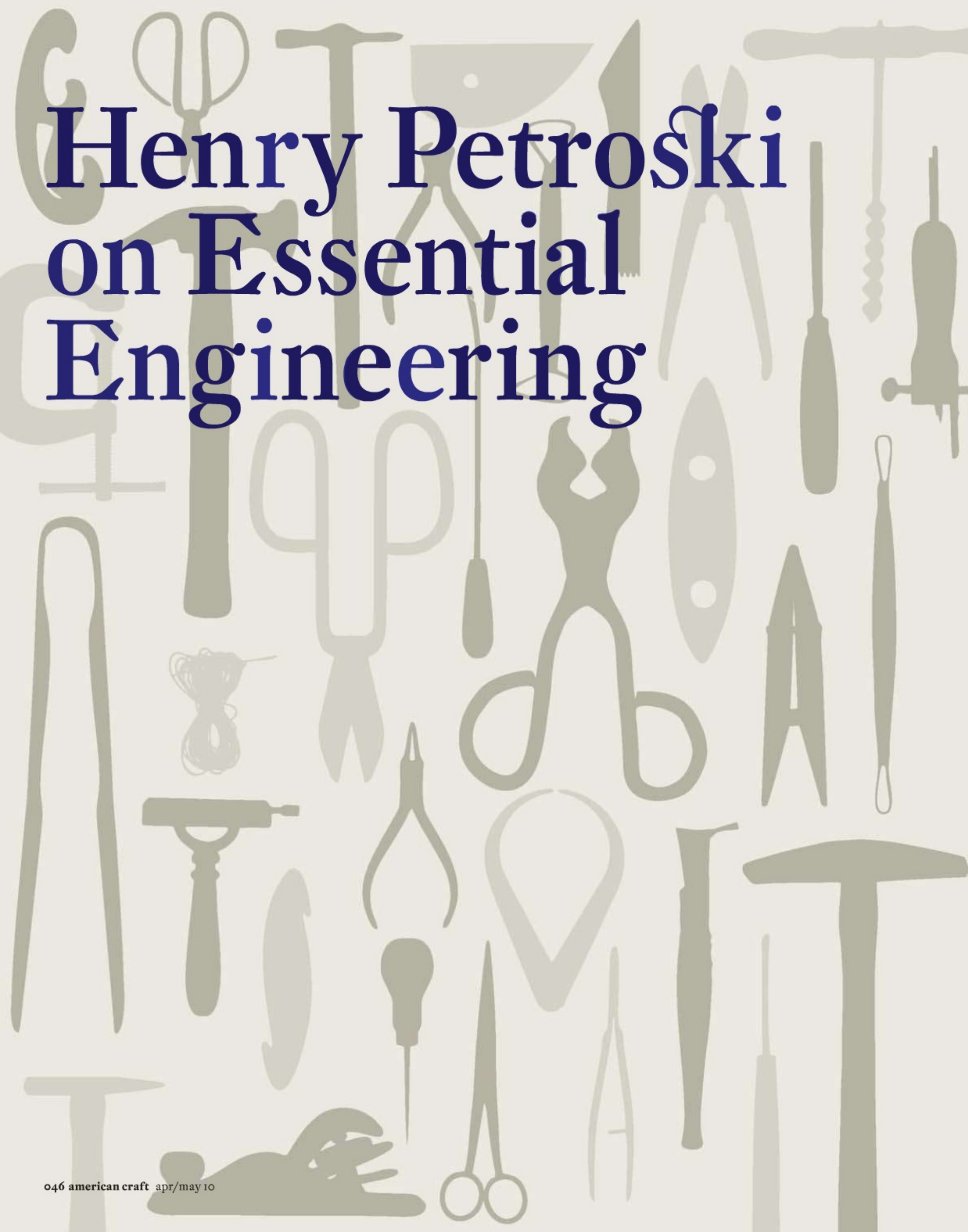
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ferringallery.com
michaelsherrill.net

Mercy Seat photos Jim McGuire.



Henry Petroski on Essential Engineering



INTERVIEW BY
Suzanne Ramljak

ILLUSTRATION BY
Emily CM Anderson

The noted engineer and writer argues that in some sense we are all engineers finding solutions to problems.

Henry Petroski is a practicing engineer and professor of engineering and history at Duke University, where he has taught since 1980. He is the author of 14 books and has published hundreds of articles in newspapers, magazines and professional journals. In 1987 Petroski served as writer and presenter of the BBC television documentary, *To Engineer Is Human.* He contributes a regular engineering column to *American Scientist* magazine and lectures throughout the world. His most recent book, *The Essential Engineer: Why Science Alone Will Not Solve Our Global Problems,* was published by Alfred A. Knopf this year.

He spoke with Suzanne Ramljak about such issues as engineering's rootedness in craft, universally valued tools and the differences between science and engineering.



Photo Catherine Petroski.

Suzanne Ramljak: *In your first book,* To Engineer Is Human, *you state, "The ideas of engineering are in our bones and part of our human nature and experience…. We are all engineers of sorts." Can you elaborate on that claim?*

Henry Petroski: We are all constantly faced with little problems in daily life and have to deal with various situations that come up. People often figure out their own solutions to these problems. Some might describe this as performing tricks that we've learned. To me, this is a form of engineering in that people are solving a problem. They want to get around an obstacle–to be more comfortable, if you will.

The word engineer has a long and complicated history. In the English language the term for a long time had a more military meaning. But the root of the word "engineer" is found in "ingenuity." In that sense engineering is coming up with solutions to problems, and while they are not all ingenious, there is an ingredient of cleverness. So that's what I mean when I say we have engineering in our bones.

SR *How do you view engineering in relation to craft?*

HP It is rooted in craft. Modern engineering today is generally believed to have gone beyond craft in that it uses mathematics and science in ways that aren't required in the crafts. Engineering has become more formalized and its solutions more predictable. But there remains a lot of art in engineering in the sense that it involves judgment, and that's unquantifiable. You can't always have numbers for everything. In the end you've got to make these human leaps.

SR *When you write about the creative process you use words like "ineffable" and "elusive." You seem to accept that there's a mystery behind all creation, whether in engineering or art.*

HP Yes, I believe that. Because in both cases you are starting with a blank sheet of paper or a blank canvas and you have to make that leap to begin to put something on it. How do you go from sitting ›

before an empty screen or page to then having something on it that's meaningful and that can be elaborated upon? I don't think that process is understood completely. And sometimes an idea comes out of nowhere and you wish you had some surface to capture it on.

SR *So it is like leaping into the void.*
HP I almost think of it as a leap *from* the void. There is an intuition that what you are creating or doing is worthwhile. But at the same time, in order to be a successful engineer or artist, there has to be a willingness to keep taking these chances and leaps, knowing that everything might not pan out. You cannot become immobilized because of this. If you are too worried about making a mistake, you might never put anything down or even get started.

SR *You have rejected the common notion that necessity is the mother of invention. Instead, you hold that want or luxury begets invention. So if we are driven by a perpetual quest for new and improved things, are we doomed to permanent dissatisfaction?*
HP Well, very few people are satisfied with the latest gadgets and creations. They very soon recognize their limitations and realize that a new thing would be better with this or that feature. Or, sometimes, fewer features because then it would be simpler to operate. This is the basis of my theory that failure is the driving force behind all invention; forms evolve based on the shortcomings we perceive in the performance of their antecedents. And we invent new forms to accommodate such failures in function. But we do not absolutely need these new forms; we want them because we see them as improvements.



SR *Based on your theory, I would guess that the discontented make the best inventors.*
HP Inventors are not themselves necessarily discontented. A lot of inventors get ideas from discontented people, however. Inventors just listen to who is complaining about what, and they find an opening in which they can invent something. It becomes a challenge to them. Of course, they might also be motivated by an opportunity to make money. But then, not all inventions pan out. For inventors, like artists, not every piece is a masterpiece.

SR *You've quoted Edison as saying: "Show me a satisfied man and I will show you a failure." Given that dissatisfaction greases the wheels of invention, I wonder if there's a way to cultivate and foster invention, or to produce more inventors?*
HP I am not aware of a school for inventors. People in engineering schools are always talking about teaching design, which is like invention. But it remains an eternally unresolved issue. I know that some cultures, like the Japanese and the Korean, are not satisfied with the rate at which they invent. They both would like to emulate the Americans, whom they see as very creative. Although the Japanese and Koreans are good at adapting other cultures' inventions, they are not really known for developing new things, at least in terms of modern technology.

So how do you identify innovative or creative people? That is an ongoing problem. I remember in college that we read a book on creativity, and I found it very confusing. It was a collection of essays on the subject and nobody had an answer. They were all batting at the question from different directions. The issue of creativity and invention is timeless; nobody has really gotten to the heart of it. And yet we continue to produce inventors.

SR *Since this issue of American Craft is devoted to tools, I'm curious to know what you consider to be the first tool invented by humans?*
HP It depends on what you would call a tool. The general understanding is that a tool is not part of your own body. It is usually something that is actually fabricated or fashioned. I tend to think of tools as something portable, rather than more permanent structures. As such, I would say the toothpick is probably the first tool. I read an anthropological study arguing that the oldest human habit is tooth-picking. I'm inclined to agree with that, because nothing can be more irritating than having something stuck in your teeth.

SR *And what tool seems to be the most common worldwide? Is there one implement that all cultures can't seem to live without?*
HP Off the top of my head I would say the hammer, or some kind of pounding device. It is hard to imagine this kind of implement not being in everyone's tool kit in one form or another. We usually think of a hammer as being associated with a nail, but there are lots more kinds of hammers. A rock is a hammer, for instance. There are countless variations in material and shape, but they all start from this basic idea of a pounding tool or implement.



Left to right: Riveting hammer, ball pane hammer, upholstery hammer, joiner's mallet, bossing mallet, cross pein pin hammer, dead blow hammer and claw hammer.

There remains a lot of art in engineering in the sense that it involves judgment, and that's unquantifiable.

SR *Which tools or inventions would you identify as being the most important in shaping human history?*

HP If we are talking about recorded history rather than prehistory, I would put the steam engine high up in importance for a variety of reasons. Before the steam engine there was no scheduled ocean shipping, because you could never tell how strong the winds would blow and how long it would take to get where you wanted to go. So the steam engine made it possible to schedule deliveries. It also allowed you to set up factories away from a source of water or other sources of power that weren't portable. I would also single out the pencil, or some kind of writing instrument, as being extremely important to civilization as we know it. The pencil proved to be a crucial tool for communication and literacy.

SR *Let's move on to your most recent book,* The Essential Engineer: Why Science Alone Will Not Solve Our Global Problems. *How would you state the basic premise of that book?*

HP The thrust is characterized in the book's subtitle. There is a lot of talk about science fixing global warming and other serious issues we face. And I try in this book to draw a clear distinction between science and engineering, which are not equivalent. They really have different objectives. The subject of science is the given world, which at any time also includes the products of engineering and invention, and even of craft. The object of engineering, on the other hand, is to create things, to add to the given world, to solve its problems. Once something is added to the given world then it can be a topic of interest to science. But generally speaking, doing science does not produce new things.

SR *One early reviewer of your book wrote that you "were outraged by the persistent elevation of scientists over engineers in relation to intelligence and creativity." Is this really how you feel?*

HP I wouldn't describe myself as outraged, although I see how someone might read parts of the book and get that impression. There is no question that scientists have more cultural status and as a result are listened to with perhaps greater reverence than they sometimes deserve. And there are some scientists who really do look down upon engineering as nothing but applied science. Clearly, as we've been discussing, engineering is much more than that.

SR *This seems to tie into the larger cultural bias toward thinking over making, the theoretical over the practical. If scientists are considered to be the superior minds and we blindly follow their advice, this could have serious social consequences.*

HP Scientists need tempering. It is an oversimplification to think that science has all of the knowledge, insight and wisdom. There is a lot that science still doesn't know. We've been talking about how invention is related to improvement and how things are always evolving. Science is also changing and evolving. It is different today than it was 100 years ago. This means that a pronouncement of science is not necessarily written in stone. So I think there should be a stronger recognition of that, along with the balance that can come from more practical applications and input from engineers.

SR *If you could have readers take away one lesson about engineering, what would it be?*

HP Engineering is a creative practice, and is ultimately very beneficial to society. The products of engineering improve the world. I would even go so far as to say that they are essential for civilization. But I also acknowledge that no product of engineering or any human endeavor is perfect. There is always room for improvement. ✚

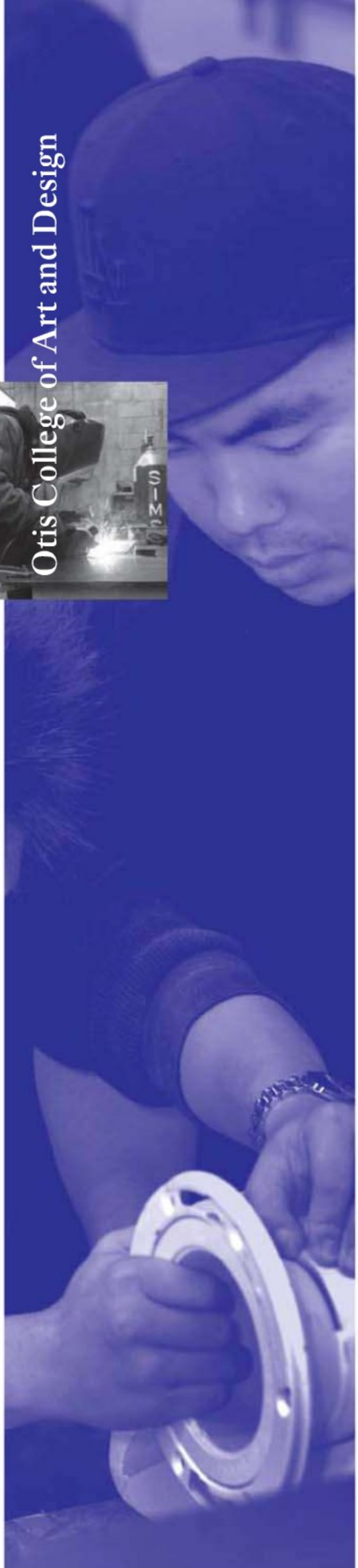
Suzanne Ramljak, a writer, curator and art historian, is the editor of Metalsmith *magazine. Her interview with Richard Sennett appeared in American Craft, October/November 2009.*

Selected publications by Henry Petroski:

- *The Essential Engineer: Why Science Alone Will Not Solve Our Global Problems,* 2010
- *The Toothpick: Technology and Culture,* 2007
- *Small Things Considered: Why There Is No Perfect Design,* 2003
- *The Book on the Bookshelf,* 1999
- *Remaking the World: Adventures in Engineering,* 1997
- *The Evolution of Useful Things,* 1992
- *The Pencil: A History of Design and Circumstance,* 1990
- *To Engineer Is Human: The Role of Failure in Successful Design,* 1985



Tyler School of Art, Temple University



Otis College of Art and Design



Art Center College of Design

Expanding the Toolbox

STORY BY
Jo Lauria







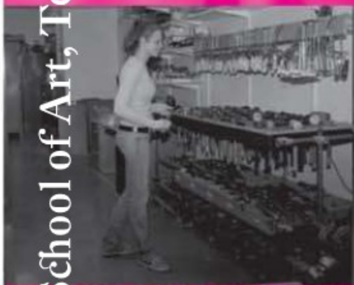
Can the hand coexist with the digital in the education of future makers and designers? Students at three leading American art colleges find out as they learn the tools of their trade.

There is a lament often voiced at craft conferences that the younger generation is losing its hand skills to the computer. The implication is that the craft arts will wither and die on the vine because the new generation of artists lack the techniques required to create well-crafted objects. Seduced by the computer, these up-and-comers will have traded their hand skills for digital programs that (allegedly) do the "handwork" for them.

Does this lament have substance? The answer could only be obtained by going to the source–art colleges–and posing questions: what kind of tools are the students learning to prepare them for their professions in the arts? Is the computer an integral tool to be mastered for creative production? Does the "tool set" include learning craftsmanship?

Visiting Tyler School of Art, Temple University, Philadelphia; Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles; and Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, schools with which I've had some connection, I was able to observe the learning from the trenches. Through talks with students and faculty, I explored the process by which art students connected to faculty who impart the necessary skill sets. I found the new "tools of creativity" to be a revelation.









Tyler School of Art, Temple University

Tools for the Postindustrial World

Left to right: Student in the tool room; Associate Professor Daniella Kerner overseeing the casting process; Professor Stanley Lechtzin with student retrieving resin print from Objet 3-D printer. Opposite: Majors studio.





A university level craft program where the computer claims a prominent position is the Metals/Jewelry/CAD-CAM department at Tyler School of Art–indeed, Computer-Aided Design and Computer-Aided Manufacturing is part of its title. Stanley Lechtzin, a professor in the department since 1962, has been its guiding spirit, leading the students and other department faculty into the digital world. Lechtzin was first introduced to the computer in 1962 during a visit to the Burroughs Corporation main frame facility in Detroit. In the mid-to-late 1970s, when personal computers began to show up on the shelves of electronic stores, Lechtzin bought a Radio Shack TRS80-Model I.

Excited by the potential application of this emerging technology to the metals/jewelry discipline, Lechtzin received a grant to install 20 Apple IIe computers in a computer lab on campus. "I started using advanced technologies at Tyler in 1984 and I was the first to bring computers into the studio," recalls Lechtzin. "I encouraged students to use the computer for designing jewelry for bench work and to make presentation drawings and renderings of designs for clients."

The current metals/jewelry curriculum at Tyler emphasizes digital 3-D modeling programs and computer applications used in the production of 3-D objects. Students begin jewelry classes as sophomores, and as metals/jewelry majors they are required to take two computer courses in their junior and senior year. Lechtzin has found that "by and large, students are averse to computers. But they soon get over the hurdle and accelerate their learning curve."

Once they've mastered the digital language, the students have access to the studio's two 3-D printers (one that prints in plaster or starch, and the other an Objet printer that can print in 13 different resins) and can use the CNC machine (computer numerical milling machine), laser cutters and a laser welder. Lechtzin believes that "CAD-CAM/RP (Rapid Prototyping) is a new and original medium for exploration: It offers students the opportunity to operate in a postindustrial, high-tech digital world." But don't make the mistake of asking Lechtzin if the computer is the newest tool in his professional toolbox; he bristles at this assessment and asserts: "CAD-CAM/RP are not just tools; they are more than tools. They comprise a *medium,* because the computer and the 3-D printer provide the materials *and* the tools to manipulate materials."

There's a place for hand tools as well in the curriculum and the studio. Tyler has a room fully stocked with the traditional

Shop photos courtesy of Stanley Lechtzin and Daniella Kerner.





Oposite bottom:
Shea Webber
Bambi Brooch, found object, sterling silver, gold leaf, hand fabricated.

Top:
Rebecca Annand
Cameo II, brooch, resin, CAD modeled, 3-D print.

Top right:
Michelle Beaulieu
Vacuumed Bacteria, neckpiece, silver, lint, resin, spray paint, hand fabricated.

hand tools for metalwork. And the main studio is equipped with 24 jeweler's benches. The intro sophomore course is where students learn to work with materials, tools and technical processes, explains associate professor Daniella Kerner. "Projects include designing a ring: the students use hand tools, make the model, then cast it. They learn all the traditional processes of working with metals and other materials to make jewelry and objects working at the bench," Kerner observes. "Students fall in love with hand fabrication."

The computer and the hand are not in competition but in collaboration, Lechtzin believes. "Without experience of materials, processes, hand tools and hand manipulation, students lack the experience necessary to be good designers using computer programs, as they don't have the 'feel' and the knowledge of how a jewelry piece is made." Thus, the hand empowers the computer in many ways beyond the obvious tap-tap-tapping on the keyboard. "The whole world is digital and it is essential that students today have the ability to work comfortably in the 2-D and 3-D digital environment," asserts Lechtzin. "Adding technology to the program brings craft into the current century and prepares for the future without giving up any traditional craft practices."

Old-School Tools and New Technologies



Otis College of Art and Design

Left and right: Aida Klein, Otis model shop manager, loads a sheet of MDF to laser-cut a template and discusses laser-cutting perforations in neoprene. Middle: Welding metal. Opposite: Cutting wood with large saw.





Bottom:
Shaun Redsar
Zygo Teapot. This junior teapot project reflects the theme of bones. The model was designed using a CAD software program and rapid prototype technology to create the white bone-like pieces and assembly. The metal ball in the center was a found object.



If you're looking for a crafts track at Otis College of Art and Design you won't find it in the college catalog. The Product Design department seems to be the place where students learn traditional skills of working with wood, metal, ceramics, plastics and fabrics along with the digital skills required to keep current with emerging technologies. "Students in product design use technology, but they are not technicians or engineers," remarks founding chair Steve McAdam. "They are creators, artists and makers who thrive on diversity and engaging in design challenges."

One course for product design majors was for a cremation urn, team-taught by Joan Takayama-Ogawa and Randall Wilson. The course was sponsored by Hillside Memorial Park and Mortuary, Los Angeles, a Jewish cemetery known as the final resting place of many entertainment notables. The Hillside marketing and management team planned to select a design from the students' final projects that had the most commercial viability and the potential to become their "branded" urn. The winning student would receive a cash prize plus royalties in exchange for the design and manufacturing rights.

The directive for the students, says Takayama-Ogawa, was to design "a vessel

Shop photos Robert Apodaca.

of reverence knowing someone would cry in front of it." The students considered it an important project and especially valued the experience of working with an actual client. The first step was to learn about the history of urns and their social and cultural implications—and that of cremation in Judaism. "These urns are intended to be a piece of art work that people are buying," comments Michael Kollins, assistant chair of the department. "They are objects that reflect upon the value of that person as well as the value of the piece."

Each student made 40 pencil drawings of urn shapes from which one sketch was selected for the design process. This would be turned into a scale model using clay—a medium chosen to provide the students with the opportunity to acquire ceramic skills. Turning next to the computer and 3-D printers, the students worked out the kinks of their designs and made the suggested modifications in form, shape and draft on the computer by using 3-D modeling software, typically Rhino and Illustrator. The students used CAD-CAM/RP to translate their clay sketch models into 3-D prototypes to be presented as the full-scale finished models of the final products.

In the end, the Hillside executives were so impressed with the work, they unexpectedly chose four urn designs instead of one. Whether achieved through high-tech or low-tech means, what mattered most to them was whether the aesthetics of the urns could withstand the test of time. Inarguably, product design students working with clay today at Otis are far afield of the direction forged by Peter Voulkos in the early 1950s at the ceramics studio. Yet they are utilizing tools and methodologies of traditional craft practices, while adding the advanced skills relevant in the digital world.

The monster of all product design courses at Otis is the class on "hard-line" durable products. For 2009-10, the assignment is to fabricate a California-modified cruising bicycle from metal and with working parts. "It takes a village to build a functioning bike in 13 weeks," instructor Randall Wilson comments. And that's exactly what the students do: they draw, design and style a rideable bike.

Using technologies from drawing software to computerized milling processes to hand fabrication, students translate their sketches into fully functioning bikes showing their understanding of ergonomics, mechanics, physics, aesthetics, construction and mobility. They acquire the hand skills of bending, drilling, cutting, grinding and finishing metal. They also learn to work with industry by outsourcing certain components. Once the bike is built, the students apply graphic design and hand-painting skills in the surface detailing of the frame.

Wilson feels that the project nearly dispels the myth that handcraftsmanship is no longer needed in our culture. "Computers do not make design any easier; the content hasn't changed; the methodologies have changed. By using all tools—conceptual, physical and digital—the abilities of designers are elevated; they are better equipped to unravel, expose and understand the substance of design."



Bottom left:
Alex Hubbell
Rima: A Forever Vessel.
This student's RP and painted cremation urn represents the loved one's inner radiance, vitality of spirit and vibrancy of heart. The radiating pattern is inspired by rings of a tree.

Below:
Several of the finished California-modified cruising bicycles designed by students in a 13-week course in which they used a range of technologies including drawing software and computerized milling processes.





Tools of the Creative Domain

Top left and right: Instructor demonstrating metal cutting, and students at CNC machinery. Opposite: Student Nicole Ladcu working on the lathe; workshop in vacuum forming.







The history, usage, meaning, making and aesthetics of tools are so central to the curriculum of Art Center College of Design that an exhibition and an associated course focused on the topic last fall. The Alyce de Roulet Williamson Gallery at Art Center presented the exhibition "TOOLS," co-organized by Stephen Nowlin and John O'Brien. Tools and Creativity–a class offered through the Integrated Studies department–was taught in the gallery during the run of the show by co-instructors Randall Wilson (who teaches at both Otis and Art Center) and Seth Kauffman.

The intersection of the dual learning formats offered through the exhibition and class was characteristic of the "horizontal" approach of Integrated Studies, a department founded on the principles of facilitating communication and cross-pollination between majors. The class was held in the gallery, says department chair Wendy Adest, so that the students would learn to "fabricate tools for the creative act and develop a better understanding of how tools influence our culture and thinking." This objective dovetailed with the curators' aim to elucidate the impact tools have had on human evolution and the power they have wielded over biological, cultural and social history.

The starting point for the exhibition curators and class instructors was to view tools as an extension of the human body. Hammers, levers and punches extend the reach of the hand, wrist and arm; knives, scythes and axes are extensions of the jaw and teeth; compasses, microscopes, camera lenses, amplifiers and rulers enhance human senses. "Tools and human progress are the same story, and our long history as toolmakers, our compulsion to tinker with the limits of our reach and our senses… should be an endearment we share with those long-long-ago relations," explains Nowlin, referring to the ancestors who made the first tools from sticks and stones.

The curators searched collections of ancient, scientific and modern tools. "We looked for those instances in which artists took up the redesign of tools and implements in order to focus the viewer's attention on them as artifacts," adds O'Brien. The outcome was an impressive display of Neolithic stone tools alongside a full-scale model of the Mars Pathfinder Lander/Rover, bracketed by artworks that looked like tools or commented on tool-ness.

The students' assignment was to create a drawing implement that would be an extension of the hand, wrist and arm. Further, the tool had to incorporate a moving

Object photos Steven Heller and Vahe Alaverdian / "TOOLS" photo Steven Heller / Shop photos courtesy of Art Center College of Design.









Opposite top:
Jung Lim Park
Pop wall clock, Z-Corp 3-D plaster-based print, clock mechanism, paint, rapid prototyping.

Oposite bottom:
View of the "TOOLS" exhibition at the Williamson gallery with (foreground) Gail Wight's *Meaning of Miniscule,* of Plexiglas, electronics, software, LCD screen and audio.

Top:
Dominic Marchese,
Fitted Form - Pig,
lathe-turned wood, cast bronze.

Right:
Teodrus Hailye
Leafblower Memorial,
mixed media (plastic), foam, faux bronze surfacing, hand-sculpting, laser cutting, assembly, painting.

Park, Marchese and Hailye works are by students in Integrated Studies at Art Center.

mechanism that revolved. The drawing tools were to be made in the shops at Art Center. Collaborating with the shop technicians, students could learn the necessary materials and techniques. Additionally, the students had to be proficient in 2-D and 3-D computer modeling programs to render their design sketches digitally.

After the students fabricated their tool, each produced a drawing 4 by 15 feet. Drawing with extended reach required that the student relinquish a certain amount of control. The results were abstract compositions composed of rhythms and repeating lines. Wilson acknowledges: "Every tool speaks a language; every tool is unique. I wanted the student to confirm the direct relationship between the hand tool and the drawing, to recognize that each drawing was a response to the tool."

The rationale behind the exhibition and class was to reaffirm the primacy of *made by hand.* "Art Center has had a history of privileging the hand," Adest asserts. "The hand is considered the thinking tool." Wilson adds: "The computer is an advanced tool, but it is fundamentally an extension of the hand. The experience of working by hand with materials and manual tools informs the digital design process." The faculty at Art Center wants to ensure that students have both tool sets under their belt. It is a dated notion to polarize the hand and technology. Both are valid skill sets and should happily coexist in the expanded toolbox. ✚

Jo Lauria is a curator and decorative art/design historian based in Los Angeles.

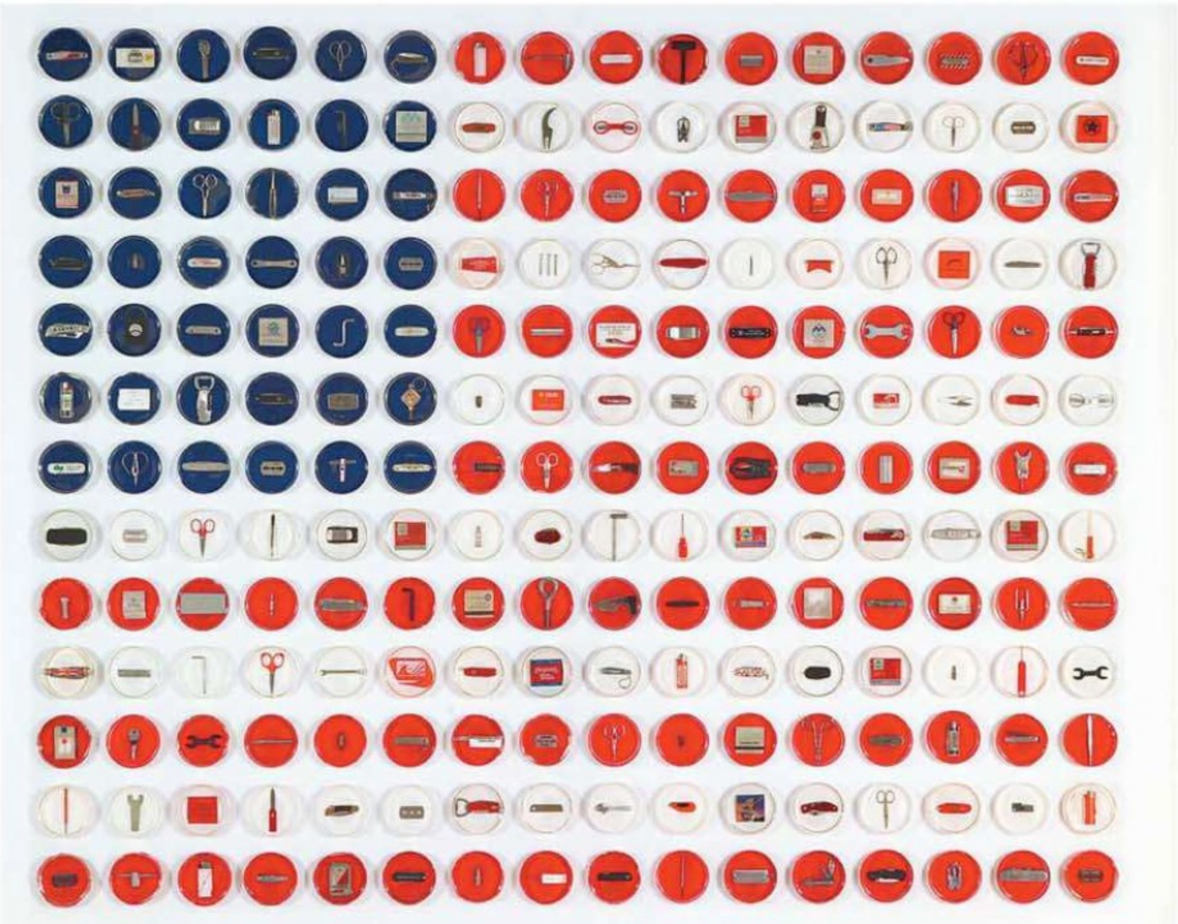
Confiscated Culture

STORY BY
Mija Riedel

"Each piece starts with an idea. The materials come afterward," says Michele Pred, "as I discover them." The conceptual artist develops her ideas by hunting for materials that embody her thoughts. More often than not, the objects that Pred assembles into wall installations or freestanding sculptures are sharp, provocative and metaphorically loaded—scissors, pocketknives, discarded cellphone chargers. Diverse elements advance her range of ideas, which centers on cultural identity, excessive consumerism and the connections between craft and technology.

Pred's hunt for visually compelling, symbolically rich materials has led her to places she never intended to frequent: New York City subway tunnels, eBay, airport security offices. More than once, Pred has climbed into dumpsters at San Francisco International, shovel in hand, to search through tons of scissors and corkscrews for particularly small pocketknives or pink sewing scissors. Such excavations resulted in *Fear Culture,* a 66-by-80 inch American flag constructed from confiscated razor blades, screwdrivers, scissors, lighters, matches and bottle openers. The piece is part of Pred's Confiscated series, started in 2002 as a response to 9/11 and homeland security regulations. Each small, seemingly insignificant item—nail clippers, tweezers—embodies "the cultural residue of a particular moment in history," Pred explains, and "the weight of a changed world." Collectively, the 208 confiscated objects function as social and political commentary; individually, each evokes a more personal experience. Pred isolated and mounted each article in a petri dish, an object imbued with multiple layers of meaning in its own right, synonymous with scientific experiments and living, occasionally anomalous cultures—in this case, a culture of fear.

The influence of Pop art—in particular the work of Robert Rauschenberg and



Left:
Fear Culture, 2007, Confiscated series, airport confiscated items, metal, plastic, resin, petri dishes, 66 x 80 in.

Opposite top:
Blue, 2005, Confiscated series, airport confiscated lighters, 16 x 18 in.

Opposite bottom:
Nesting, 2004, car cellphone chargers, 24 x 36 in.
Collection of the Contemporary Museum, Hawaii.



Jasper Johns—is apparent in Pred's preference for found and discarded objects and for images such as flags and targets. Less obvious but even more notable is the influence of Pred's father, a professor of cultural geography at UC Berkeley, and Pred's own childhood experiences sitting around the dining table listening to graduate students discuss economics, linguistics, religion, feminism and art. Consequently, Pred explores the nexus of personal, political and cultural identity with unusual ease in works such as *San Francisco Grooms*, a three-tiered pink wedding cake topped with two bridegrooms, and *Hand Work*, an installation comprising hand-knit pot holders she collected in thrift stores in Sweden. (Pred is half-Swedish and spent childhood summers in Scandinavia, comparing Swedish norms with U.S. conventions).

Over the past eight years, Pred has worked with expired New York City MetroCards, old gas pump nozzles and airplane wings salvaged from junkyards. *Security Blanket* is a thin, flat, shiny wall piece elegantly crafted from an international selection of razor blades: Pakistani, Indian, Iranian, German, American, Japanese and Czech. *Medusa* is a 10-foot-long curly jumble of discarded cellphone chargers. Arranged side by side on a wall, the cellphone chargers resemble sci-fi palm fronds. "However ugly they may be individually," Pred notes, "these mass-produced pieces take on an intriguing organic quality when placed together." By placing familiar objects in a new frame of reference, Pred composes reflections on contemporary culture that are intentionally complex.

The objects that Michele Pred assembles into installations or sculptures are sharp, provocative and metaphorically loaded—pocketknives, scissors, discarded cellphone chargers.



In 2007, Pred began exploring the connections between craft and computer code. Working with black thread on white canvas, she hand-embroidered a 2-D bar code (the black-and-white geometric patterns that code the URLs of websites). In the act, she linked the ancient practice of embroidery with 21st-century technology; she also indirectly referenced the historical link between weaving and computing, which traces contemporary coding back to the punch card pattern-making system of the 19th-century Jacquard loom. Any cellphone with the appropriate application can read Pred's embroidered code and connect to an online message displaying the title *You Are What You Buy*.

Pred explored the activist potential of her bar code a step further in 2009 with a print entitled *Blue and Yellow 2D Barcode*. On Black Friday, she shopdropped (the reverse of shoplifting in that one covertly places items in a store) 10 copies of *Blue and Yellow 2D Barcode* in a local IKEA. That afternoon, she mentioned it on Facebook and the story went viral. Twenty-four hours later, all prints had sold, and Pred was contemplating the unanticipated, interactive dimension her work had taken. *Blue and Yellow 2D Barcode* had expanded her palette to include social networking—a virtual petri dish for the 21st century. The material of cyberspace was already developing her ideas in new directions.

Mija Riedel writes about the arts, cultural icons and sustainability. She's currently working on a series of interviews for the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art.

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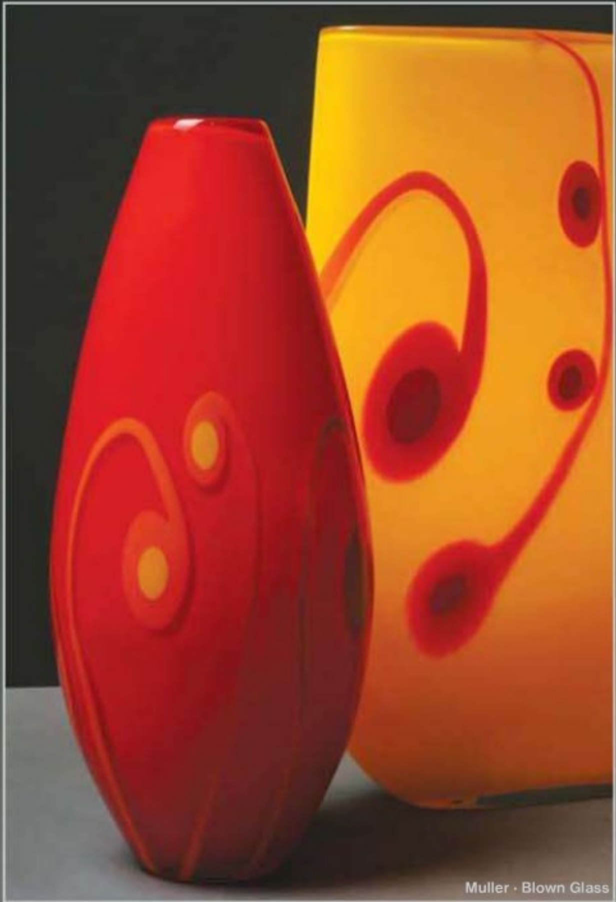
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Good Hope for Craft: Cape Town, South Africa

"Art in South Africa seems very personal. There are so many cultural stories and nuances that need to be expressed before they go missing in the imminent mix of culture and race."—Nic Braden

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STORY BY
Fraser H. Conlon











Left:
One of the local women who participate in the cultural empowerment project Monkeybiz.

Right (top to bottom):
Monkeybiz artists
Makosi Molise
White Longhorn Bokkie;
Ncedile Ntloko
Blue Longhorn Bokkie;
Nokude Mpakati
Red and Blue Bokki;
wire, cotton and beads, each 12⅖ x 10⅗ x 3½ in.

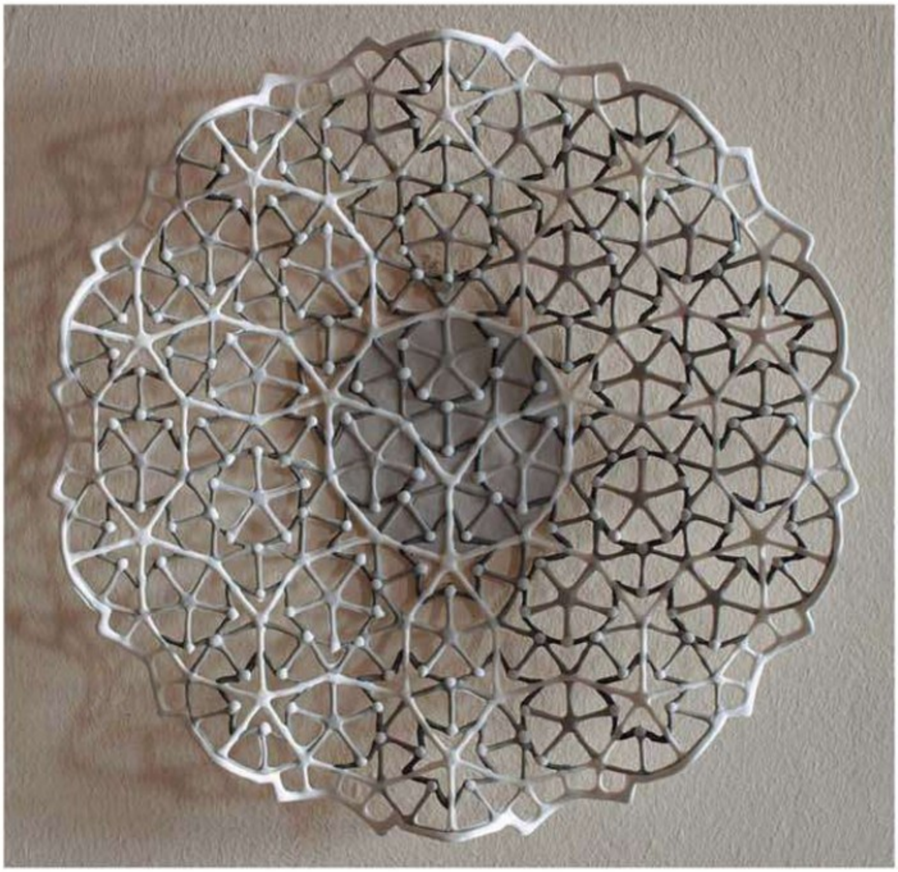
Opposite:
Nicholas Hlbo
Ingubo Yesizwe, 2008, leather, rubber, gauze, ribbon, steel, found ball-and-claw chair leg, butcher's hook, chain, 8½ x 5 x 98 ft.

To visit Cape Town is to be transported to a world of great natural beauty and a complex history. Situated on the southern tip of the African continent on the shore of Table Bay, Cape Town is the second-most populous city in South Africa, the largest in land area, and one of the most multiracial and multicultural places on earth. The Cape region's indigenous peoples were joined by Europeans as long ago as 1652, when the Dutch established a settlement there, which soon drew other immigrants from Europe and (some involuntarily) from other parts of Africa and Asia, and the hub of a colony was born. The cultural diversity of Cape Town is reflected in the craft and art that can be found there, some of it unique to this part of the world.

The natural amphitheater-shaped area below Table Mountain, known as the City Bowl, has extraordinary galleries, craft markets and museums that embrace Cape Town's eclectic heritage. The Iziko South African National Gallery houses a splendid collection of South African, African, British, French, Dutch and Flemish art providing insight into the range of aesthetic production in the country over the centuries. Of particular importance is the museum's collection of South African beadwork. This craft is culturally significant since it was traditionally a form of creative expression for women predominantly from the Xhosa and Zulu tribes. Today it has blossomed into a varied and fascinating craft form.

Barbara Jackson and Shirley Fintz have found another way to embrace South Africa's eclectic heritage. In 2000 the two artists founded the cultural empowerment project Monkeybiz, with the goal to alleviate poverty in the Cape townships (areas that had grown up under apartheid) and transfer skills to uneducated and unemployed women. The women create magical sculptural animals inspired by the wildlife of southern Africa—brightly patterned elephants, antelopes and rhinoceroses that elicit smiles at the playful ingenuity of the ▸





Above:
Streetwire collaboration
Designers: Michaela Howse and Elias Kula, *Cow Masterpiece Looking Left,* Nguni series, 2006, glass beads, copper wire, 11 ⅘ x 23⅘ x 6 in.

Right:
Christina Bryer
Mandala, 2009, porcelain, dia. 4¾ in.

work. "Monkeybiz has improved the quality of life for these women," says Joan Krupp, who manages the Monkeybiz retail store. "They have food on their tables and are able to send their children to school." The project has been enormously successful, with a global reach and distribution supporting over 450 women living in the impoverished townships of the region. "The art of beadwork had died due to apartheid," says Krupp. "Monkeybiz revived this form in a contemporary, quirky medium." In addition to keeping alive the ancient traditions of beading, Monkeybiz also has an active AIDS and HIV Awareness program designed to educate and assist with medical care and preventive measures, along with providing the artists with access to necessary medications.

Nestled on the quirky lanes of the Cape Quarter is Streetwires, another successful venture that has used cultural skills of wirework and beading to produce limited-edition sculptures. Sculptures of Nguni, a favored breed of African cattle, are highly sought after and represent some of the most successful pieces from this studio. "These pieces are extremely special, as they were the first high-end, larger-scale, realistic fully beaded rendition of an animal revered in South African culture," says Cathy Ronasan, Streetwires' export manager. "They changed bead and wire craft into art."

A visit to the Cape Quarter would not be complete without spending time in Africa Nova, a lovely gallery housing an eclectic collection of fine jewelry, artworks, ceramics, textiles and crafts, all effectively curated within the split-level space.

Woodstock, the oldest suburb in the City Bowl, was recently designated one of the city's improvement projects, and as a result is an emerging and creative hub with several new prestigious galleries, a host of cafés and restaurants and an extremely popular Saturday farmers market. The most notable galleries to visit are Michael Stevenson, considered the leading contemporary art gallery in the country, and, next door, Linda Goodman Gallery, another venerable space representing established South African artists such as William Kentridge, David Goldblatt and Sam Nlengethwa. To discover a new generation, one should look into Whatiftheworld Gallery, selected by *Contemporary Magazine* (London) as one of the "Top 50 Emerging Galleries from Around the World" in 2007. "We are committed to nurturing our artists and working closely with them on a curatorial level," says director Justin Rhodes, on why the gallery has been a success. "Even though we work with younger artists, we place a strong focus on presenting the works with a very high production level."

In among the fine arts venues of Woodstock is a vibrant and active craft community. The ceramics studio of Andile Dyalvane, a rising young talent, is located in one of the neighborhood's most exciting commercial spaces, the Old Biscuit Mill. Dyalvane's work, a skillful mingling of ancient

Right:
Katherine Glenday
Africa Burns, 2009, porcelain, dimensions variable.

Bottom:
Katherine Glenday
Cape Point Vessel, 2009, porcelain, 13¾ x 11⅘ in;
Vessel, 2009, 4¾ x 4¾ in.



traditional codes and modern expressions, has been acknowledged through various national awards. Born into a pastoral Xhosa family, he has actively challenged himself to bridge his different worlds—the rural, traditional value system that is an important part of his heritage, and the urban city life he experiences on a daily basis. The results, soulful and expressive, are beautifully proportioned ceramic vessels, often marked with a razor blade or found tools, tattooed symbols of primordial culture and tribal scarification.

To fully experience the inspired craft of the Cape, a drive should be planned to the fishing village Kalk Bay, about an hour's drive from the city center, where a remarkable group of South Africa's ceramic artists reside. Katherine Glenday, an influential artist, began as a painter but then decided on porcelain as her medium. For 23 years she has devoted herself to the vessel as a form of sublime and articulate communication. Fascinated by light and inspired ▸

Fascinated by light and inspired by the splendid landscape…, Katherine Glenday captures moments that resonate, glow and calm.







by the splendid landscape surrounding her studio and The Forge, a space for music recitals, exhibitions and happenings, she captures moments that resonate, glow and calm.

Neighbors of Glenday are the brothers Chris (with whom she's worked in the past) and Nic Bladen, both silversmiths and metal workers. Chris focuses on larger sculptures of fish soaring into the air, dancing above the waves, while Nic's intricate and delicate pieces are fashioned from the indigenous plant life of the Cape, home to some 20 percent of Africa's flora. Nic casts the entire plant, including the root system, in delicate sculptures of various precious metals. "To me, art in South Africa seems very personal," says Nic. "There are so many cultural stories and nuances that need to be expressed before they go missing in the imminent mix of culture and race."

Another Kalk Bay local who contributes to the ceramics world is Christina Bryer. Her captivating porcelain mandalas offer the viewer a space for reprieve—a moment in which to rest within the perfect geometry from the noise of the world.

It should be no surprise that Cape Town is home to extraordinary art, craft, design and architecture. Varied and original, these manifestations are part of the fabric that makes South Africa and its peoples unique. With the blight of apartheid (the government policy of racial separation that was in force for 46 years) now 16 years in the past, this society is forging new creative territory, inspired by rich traditions, a spectacular physical environment and a desire to have the nation succeed through the sharing of ideas and skills, recognition of differences, and respect for ethnicity and ancient arts. "Craft in Cape Town is vibrant, colorful, chaotic and inspiring," says Cathy Ronasan. "It is beautiful in its rawness and has a soul that projects the energy of the country we live in." ✚

Fraser H. Conlon is a partner in Amaridian, a Manhattan-based gallery specializing in contemporary art from Sub-Saharan Africa.

Above:
Chris Bladen
Yellowfin Duo, 2004, edition of 15, bronze, wood and granite base, 14 x 9⁴⁄₅ x 15 in.

Right
Nic Bladen
New collection, 2009, bronze, silver, tallest 25⅖ in.

Below:
Nic Bladen
Protea caffra, 2009, bronze, 16½ x 12⅗ in.





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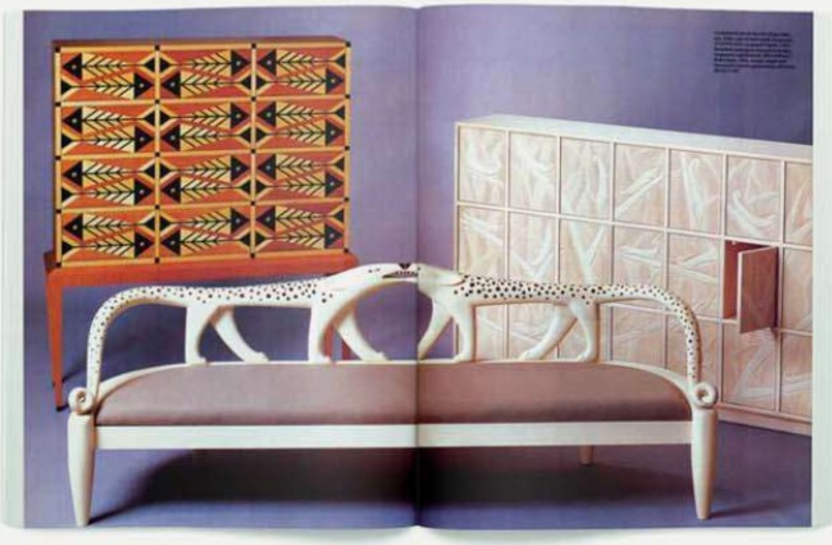
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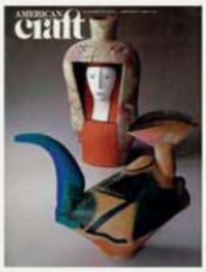
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"The more carving there is, the happier I am."
—Judy Kensley McKie

Judy Kensley McKie

STORY BY
Christine Kaminsky



At the heart of the sixth floor of 72 Spring Street in New York City is the American Craft Council library, one of the largest collections in this country of craft, art and design books documenting the studio craft movement from the 1940s to the present. The over 14,000 volumes include the Council's 68-year publishing history–all past issues of *Craft Horizons* and American Craft. We'd like to share some of this amazing past with you each issue as we dig through the stacks. And if you happen to be in New York, the library is open to the public by appointment.



In the December 1983/January 1984 issue of American Craft, curator Joy Cattanach Smith traced Judy Kensley McKie's progression from self-taught woodworker to acclaimed furniture designer and maker. Assessing the results of this evolution, Smith wrote "McKie has the rare ability to merge practicality with fantasy, utility with warmth, honesty with elegance, play with discipline."

McKie's affinity for first wood, then bronze and stone, is realized in sculptural forms that function. Often described as otherworldly and magical, her distinctive furniture is known for its bas-relief carvings of emotionally rich animal imagery. McKie herself has declared that "the more carving there is, the happier I am."

The recipient of numerous accolades, McKie was elected a Fellow of the American Craft Council in 1998. Her peers in the Furniture Society presented its Award of Distinction to her in 2005, the same year that the Smithsonian Institution's James Renwick Alliance honored her with its Master of the Medium Award; in 2008, she received the Luminaries Award from the Fuller Craft Museum. Her work is represented in museum and public collections around the country.

Pritam & Eames, the studio furniture gallery in East Hampton, NY, will include McKie's work in its anniversary show, May 28–June 29, as well as in its annual seating exhibition, Aug. 6-Sept. 7. Coinciding with the Furniture Society's conference in June at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, her work will be seen in a show on MIT's Kresge Green, June 15–July 31. And Gallery Naga in Boston is planning a major exhibition of McKie's furniture Nov. 12–Dec. 18. "Her work, like Judy in person, is genuine and real," note Bebe Pritam Johnson and Warren Eames Johnson. "We have watched people time and time again respond to this wholeness."✚

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